Witness list released; trial in Tupac's death underway

Suge Knight and Diddy associates among 200 people who could be called to testify. **In News**

The curious power of college football's Year 6

If it's indeed a magic number for coaches, come join winner's circle, Steve Sarkisian. **In Sports**

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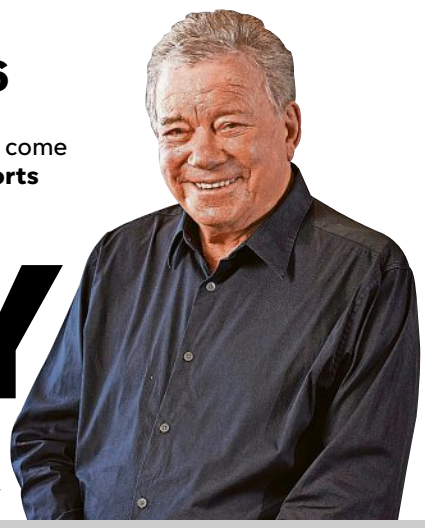

DAN MACMEDAN/USA TODAY

How cancer changed Shatner's perspective

As television's "Star Trek" turns 60, William Shatner reflects on his career and how the diagnosis affected his view about dying. **In Life**

Hong hits a nerve in Dems' primary

Old tweets now haunt WI governor candidate

Phillip M. Bailey, Molly Beck and Clara Strecker
USA TODAY NETWORK

Wisconsin Democrat Francesca Hong is pressing the reset button ahead of the Aug. 11 gubernatorial primary after leaving the door open to canceling Thanksgiving in an Aug. 3 CNN interview.

The 37-year-old state legislator, a democratic socialist, is the front-runner in a crowded swing state gubernatorial field that will be another significant test of how wide and tall the progressive wave will go in the 2026 Democratic primaries.

In a Nov. 16, 2020, social media post Hong has since deleted, she said the country should scrap the annual holiday. The event is "celebrating colonialism," and the diseases spread by European settlers that "killed [indigenous] people," she said at the time.

But in an Aug. 7 interview with USA TODAY, she made clear that, if elected, getting rid of the fall feast isn't on her to-do list.

Gubernatorial candidate Francesca Hong, a Democrat, greets people after a campaign rally Aug. 2 in Milwaukee. JOSHUA LOTT/GETTY IMAGES

"There's nothing more magical than being in a cranberry marsh, and cranberry stuffing is one of my absolute favorite dishes to make," Hong, a professional chef, told USA TODAY in an Aug. 7 interview.

"I'm not going to cancel Thanksgiving," she added.

Hong's candidacy has touched a raw nerve among establishment Democrats, who argue her unpolished messaging raises concerns about the viability of her and other Democratic Socialists of America-aligned candidates.

Hong's troubles under the national spotlight for culture war stances continued after the CNN interview, including an unearthing of previous social media posts criticizing Valentine's Day, favoring abolishing the police and being uncomfortable around White people.

"She's not ready for prime time, and the fact that she's been asked very simple questions and the way that she's responding to those questions makes the news even more should cause all of us to pause," Democrat David Crowley, who is also running for Wisconsin governor on the Democratic side, said in an interview.

Republicans are salivating at Hong being on the November ballot, where

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Wildfires get too 'familiar'

Scientists are warning that the destructive burning in Spokane is a sign of more devastation to come

Dinah Voyles Pulver USA TODAY

It didn't have to be Spokane. A fast-moving wildfire could sweep into the suburbs of any one of hundreds of cities across the United States. It's happening with increasing frequency. Paradise. Marshall. Lahaina. Los Angeles. This time it was Spokane, Washington, but scientists warn it *will* happen again.

It's a pattern that has become "uncomfortably familiar" in recent years, throughout the West and in other parts of the world, said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist with the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Although Spokane's three fires aren't anywhere near the largest in Washington this year, they are the most destructive. More than 10,000 acres have been burned, and more than 700 structures – including homes, businesses and outbuildings – have been lost. An estimated 65,000 people have been forced to flee their homes

The three fires started Aug. 1 and spread quickly, displaying the kind of extreme wildfire behavior experienced

See WILDFIRES, Page 4A

Wildfires rage in West and beyond U.S. borders

Thousands forced to flee in Oregon, Washington, Utah and Canada. **2A**

The Washington National Guard drops water on the Modrite Fire near Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake in the northeastern part of the state Aug. 5. The fire has burned more than 57,000 acres. PROVIDED BY NATIONAL WASHINGTON GUARD

Julia Lacayo, 29, uses a "So Julia" embroidered tote for her analog bag. The L.L. Bean Boat and Totes bag has emerged as the analog bag of choice. RACHEL HALE/USA TODAY

'Analog bags': Flip phones, journals, hobbies and more

Gen Z trend focuses on less time spent online

Rachel Hale
USA TODAY

"Analog" seems to be the word of the summer.

Young people are using flip phones, carrying clunky cameras and filling up journals by hand. Hobbies like embroidery, needlepoint and crocheting are finding new audiences through TikTok hashtags like #wipwednesday (work in progress Wednesday), and snail mail and pen pal clubs with letters are booming. This summer has brought a wave of phone-free parties, picnics and block parties encouraging life off screens.

So it's only natural that Gen Z's latest fashion statement is following suit.

"Analog bags," tote bags filled with portable offline items like leather-bound journals, paperback books and mini watercolor palettes, are taking over TikTok and Instagram.

"It's kind of like a 'Mary Poppins' bag that I can just dig in," says Caitlyn Kasler, a 25-year-old in Atlanta. "It's a great trend. Honestly, it's one of the better things to come out of social media."

Content creator Sierra Campbell coined the term in a TikTok last year about tips to lower screen time, and it's been spreading on social media since.

Even though the point of the trend is to get offline, "what's in my analog bag" videos with bouncy animated text, soft typing sound effects and curated sticker overlays have racked up tens of thousands of views.

See ANALOG BAGS, Page 4A

Firefighters battle huge fires across US, Canada

Blazes have forced more than 20,000 to evacuate

Karissa Waddick
USA TODAY

More than 20,000 people in southwest Canada and the western United States have fled their homes as wildfires fueled by hot, dry weather burn more than 3 million acres.

As of Aug. 9, the National Interagency Fire Center reported 183 wildfires across the United States, including eight large new ones.

Firefighters were working to contain 94 of those blazes, the agency said.

The Wrights Spring Fire in southern Oregon has burned more than 30,000 acres since it started Aug. 5 and claimed the life of a first responder.

Jason Ensign, 47, of Klamath Falls, Oregon, was operating a bulldozer to improve access to the fire when the blaze unexpectedly grew. Rescue crews found him dead.

As of Aug. 9, the fire remained uncontained. The fire and three others across Oregon forced evacuations.

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek expressed condolences for Ensign's family in a post on social media, saying his death was a "stark reminder" of the dangers first responders face. In a later post wishing Smokey Bear a happy birthday Aug. 9, Kotek urged people to do "everything possible to prevent new fires."

Wildfires across the West

In northern Utah, a blaze called the Rocky Canyon Fire has grown more than 4,000 acres since it ignited Aug. 7. Residents living near the fire, about 30 miles northeast of Salt Lake City, received their evacuation orders Aug. 9.

Two helicopter pilots died Aug. 7 while fighting a different inferno, the Widemouth 2 Fire, in southern Utah. That fire consumed 118,000 acres, the largest in the state this year.

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox offered prayers to the pilot's families in a social media post, saying the state would not forget "their courage, their service, and their sacrifice."

In a news release announcing the deaths, the U.S. Forest Service said this year's "abnormally dry and warm winter" has led to a particularly intense fire season.

Fires are burning in Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Colorado, California, Minnesota, New Mexico and Nevada, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Of the 94 blazes, four have been contained.

Three wildfires near Spokane, Washington, have consumed more than 16 square miles and forced more than 65,000 people to flee their homes.

Threat extends beyond U.S.

More than 20,000 people have been evacuated near Okanagan Lake in western Canada. The fast-moving Bald Range wildfire has burned nearly 34,000 acres and is considered "out of control" by the British Columbia Wildfire Service.

British Columbia Premier David Eby said in a social media post Aug. 9 that a woman lost her life during the Bald Range wildfire evacuation.

"My heart goes out to her family, friends, neighbors, and all those who knew her and will miss her," Eby said.

British Columbia was battling more than 100 wildfires, and lightning storms were expected to increase the risk of new fires, according to the wildfire service.

Contributing: Christopher Cann and Jeanine Santucci, USA TODAY; Zach Urness, Statesman Journal

Photo shows where the lunar eclipse will be visible on Aug. 27 PROVIDED BY NASA

Aug. 12 set to be a skywatcher's dream come true

Julia Gomez USA TODAY

The sky is about to put on an incredible show through August, as celestial events occur throughout the month. But one day in particular will offer the ultimate stargazing experience. • On Wednesday, Aug. 12, there will be a planetary alignment early in the morning, a solar eclipse in the afternoon, a new moon at night and the Perseid meteor shower will reach its peak. • The Perseid meteor shower is considered the "best meteor shower of the year," according to NASA. It can produce between 50 and 100 meteors, also known as shooting stars, in one night. On Aug. 12, it will peak, producing the most shooting stars. • Since these celestial events also coincide with the new moon on Aug. 12, skies will be extra dark and the moon's light won't interfere as much.

Here's what to know.

Skywatching events happening on Aug. 12

On Aug. 12, the following celestial events will occur, according to NASA and Star Walk:

- A **planetary parade**, also known as a planetary alignment, including six planets, will be visible in the hours before sunrise.
- A **partial solar eclipse** will be visible in U.S. states from Alaska to North Carolina beginning at around 11:34 a.m. ET, according to Time and Date. The maximum eclipse will occur at 1:46 p.m. ET. (Remember, you need special solar eclipse glasses to safely view this.)
- **Perseid meteor shower** peaks from the evening of Aug. 12 to the morning of Aug. 13.

There will also be a new moon, which will make the night sky "ideally dark," per NASA.

The U.S. will not see a total solar eclipse

The Aug. 12 total solar eclipse will only be visible from Greenland, Iceland, Spain, Russia and parts of Portugal. Residents in some U.S. states will be able to see a partial eclipse using specialized eclipse glasses.

In the United States, the sun will look like a cookie with a small bite taken out of it, according to NASA.

What states will be able to see the partial solar eclipse?

The following states will be able to see a partial solar eclipse on Aug. 12, according to USA TODAY's previous reporting and National Eclipse, an organization that provides information on upcoming eclipses:

- Alaska
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Indiana
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Montana
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New York
- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- Vermont
- Virginia
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

The planets will align and parade through the sky

On the morning of Aug. 12, six planets will align and look like they are parading across the night sky, according to Star Walk.

The following planets will be visible in the hours leading up to sunrise:

- Jupiter
- Mercury
- Mars
- Uranus
- Saturn
- Neptune

Only a few of the planets will be visible to the naked eye. Mars and Saturn will be easier to spot, but astronomers wanting to see Uranus will need binoculars, while those wanting to see Neptune will need a telescope, according to Star Walk.

Beginning on Aug. 14, just a few days after the parade, Venus will be at its brightest and outshine each star around it as it reaches its greatest eastern elongation, which is when it reaches its "widest apparent separation from the Sun," according to NASA. It will look like it is "half lit, like a tiny lunar phase" to the backyard astronomers who catch a glimpse of the planet through a telescope.

While searching for the planets, don't be surprised if they look like stars. Using an astronomy app, like Star Walk, Sky Tonight or SkyView, will make it easier to pinpoint where the planets are.

A partial lunar eclipse at the end of August

On Aug. 27, leading into the early morning of Aug. 28, there will be a lunar eclipse that will be visible in North and South America. Unlike the solar eclipse, the entire United States will be able to see the whole or part of the lunar eclipse.

The East Coast and some of the Midwest will be able to experience the full partial lunar eclipse, which will cover 93% of the moon, according to NASA. The West Coast will be able to see some of the lunar eclipse.

Tips for stargazing

Those who plan to stay up at night to watch all these magnificent events occur should do the following:

If you plan to watch, experts recommend:

- Check the weather and cloud coverage in your area to make sure conditions are optimal for viewing the celestial events.
- Find a dark location away from light pollution.
- Give your eyes 20 to 30 minutes to adjust to the dark.
- Avoid looking at phones or bright lights.

To be as comfortable as possible, dress appropriately for the weather, use bug spray and bring a blanket, a sleeping bag or a reclining chair to lie on.

Contributing: Saleen Martin

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Supreme Court faces plea to block Trump mail-in rules

Some states urging voter caution with ballots

Sarah D. Wire
USA TODAY

A voter places his ballot in a drop-off box as he votes in Colorado's primary election on June 30 in Denver. MICHAEL CIAGLO/GETTY IMAGES

Less than 90 days out from the midterms, election officials are pleading with the Supreme Court to block the Trump administration from making changes that would allow the U.S. Postal Service to decide who gets mail-in ballots.

And after Postal Service changes earlier this year that affect how quickly mail is postmarked, some states are urging voters to be cautious when putting ballots in the mail at all.

Many people expect that their ballots will be postmarked the same day they place them in mailboxes, and that is no longer guaranteed under the new rules.

"We, and me personally as a messaging issue, encourage people to use our ballot drop boxes rather than the mail system; just to avoid any potential delays or errors or frankly at this stage attempts to interfere by the federal government," Washington state Attorney General Nick Brown told USA TODAY. "Our ballot boxes are locally controlled and operated and don't involve the federal government. We generally encourage that as the best way to get people's votes in."

President Donald Trump issued an executive order in March instructing the Department of Homeland Security to compile lists of confirmed U.S. citizens eligible to vote for states to consult and ordering the USPS to only deliver ballots to voters on each state's approved mail-in ballot list.

The move, part of his second term efforts to extend more federal authority over how states run elections – and the postmarking changes – put the Postal Service at the center of the fight over who will control the House and Senate for the final two years of Trump's presidency. Trump, who has voted by mail himself, has zeroed in on absentee ballots, which he says, without proof, are often fraudulent.

The Department of Justice has argued that a lower court acted too soon in blocking the executive order because the Postal Service has not finished writing the rules that would put it in place.

"Because of pending litigation, we have no response to offer on any questions related to the Executive Order or the proposed rule," a Postal Service spokesperson said.

"The entire Trump Administration will continue lawfully enacting the agenda President Trump was elected to implement – which includes the safety and security of American elections," White House spokeswoman Lauren Bis told USA TODAY. "This campaign pledge from the President is why millions of Americans sent him back to the White House."

Legal challenges to the executive order

After lower courts blocked the order, the Trump administration asked the Supreme Court July 27 to allow federal agencies to implement two parts of his executive order that directed the USPS to create mail-in ballot rules and the DHS to compile a national database of eligible voters.

Trump filed the emergency appeal after lower courts blocked the administration from creating a federal list of eligible voters and limiting delivery of mail ballots only to people on that list in nearly half the states for the midterm elections.

"We, and me personally as a messaging issue, encourage people to use our ballot drop boxes rather than the mail system; just to avoid any potential delays or errors or frankly at this stage attempts to interfere by the federal government."

Nick Brown
Washington state Attorney General

The group of states that brought the lawsuit told the Supreme Court on Aug. 3 there would be "extraordinary consequences" if the Trump administration is allowed to move forward with an overhaul of mail-in voting rules so close to the election.

On July 5, a bipartisan group of more than 100 election officials filed a friend of the court brief to explain the administrative challenges if the executive order moved forward.

Preparations are long underway, they said, and there would not be sufficient time to test the new procedures, train election staff and educate voters about the changes.

"Should this Court approve the requested stay, thereby allowing the (executive order) to take effect within the plaintiff states fewer than 100 days before a major federal election where well over 100 million voters are likely to cast ballots, the result will be chaos," they wrote.

The Supreme Court could issue a decision any day.

Drop it off in person

Regardless of what the Supreme Court decides, states have been working to educate voters about submitting ballots by mail earlier or returning them in drop boxes all year. That includes direct appeals like social media outreach, media engagement, radio ads and mailers, according to multiple state election offices.

The USPS updated its postmark guidelines in December 2025 to reflect the date an envelope is first processed by an automated sorting machine rather than the date it was dropped off. In some cases, multiple days can pass between putting an item in the mail and it being processed and postmarked by a sorting machine.

For decades, the postmark – an official mark that shows where and when mail was accepted by the Postal Service – has been used in law as proof that an individual met a deadline, such as submitting a ballot by Election Day. More than a dozen states accept ballots as long as they were postmarked on or before the election.

"That's been a challenge for us to educate voters that, hey, if you're going to vote by mail on election day, make sure you drop it off at a polling location, not in a mailbox," Nevada Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar told USA TODAY.

The Supreme Court on June 29 said Mississippi can count late-arriving mail-in ballots. More than a dozen states accept ballots that arrive after Election Day but are postmarked before or on Election Day.

Trump admits construction error for Reflecting Pool damage

Mike Stunson
USA TODAY

For the first time, President Donald Trump has acknowledged there was a construction error on the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, which is seeing another round of costly renovations.

The initial construction cost more than $16 million, but the iconic Washington attraction had to be drained again after the Fourth of July because the American-flag-blue liner that Trump ordered began peeling.

He blamed "vandals" on the problems with the project, but after several people were accused of damaging the pool, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia dropped all the charges.

Trump lashed out at U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, saying she needs to "revisit her hastily made decision."

Now, Trump has redirected some of the blame toward contractors for the first time.

In a post on Truth Social on Sunday night, Aug. 9, the president said the reflecting pool "will be open shortly" after the new renovations.

"As with many jobs, there was also some contractor error done by rushing the job for a July 4th opening, but it was a very small area of this massive Pool, and was relatively inconsequential," he wrote.

Despite no video evidence pointing toward vandalism, Trump stopped short of placing all of the blame on contractors.

He claimed former Olympian David Hearn was seen by a National Park Service worker "violently" ripping at the pool's coating. But a separate Park Service employee said the pool was already damaged before Hearn touched it.

Prosecutors determined the reflecting pool's damage "was the result of flawed installation by the contractor ... and the rush to complete the project prior to events associated with the America 250 celebration in the weeks surrounding Independence Day 2026," Pirro's office wrote July 31 in a court filing obtained by USA TODAY.

Pirro's office claimed the Department of the Interior withheld information about the damage to the pool. When U.S. attorney's officials visited the site July 17, they found "extensive damage throughout" and requested documents about the pool's lining and installation.

Those documents indicated "a rushed and flawed installation process, with repeated failures of the lining during the installation process, and extensive peeling of the lining throughout the Reflecting Pool," the U.S. Attorney's Office wrote.

When the pool renovations are complete, more security cameras will be added in the area, the president said.

Some Republicans fret Head Start rollback

Slashing program getting bipartisan pushback

Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – The Trump administration's drastic deregulation of Head Start, a preschool and childcare program that's helped tens of millions of low-income kids, is generating bipartisan pushback in Congress – including from members within the president's own party.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced Aug. 5 that his agency is pursuing a sweeping rollback of much of the more than 100 pages of federal rules governing the multibillion-dollar program.

Among the items on the chopping block are requirements to conduct screenings for kids with disabilities, keep class sizes small, help children brush their teeth daily and mandate monitors on school buses. Pay parity rules for staff and a ban on expelling students would go by the wayside, too.

Senate Republicans have expressed wariness about the prospect of slashing those standards, which advocates say help keep kids safe and healthy.

"We've been hearing from our Head Start folks back home that are concerned about what they're seeing," Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, told USA TODAY. "That's something that we're monitoring."

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-North Carolina, said he explored reforms to Head Start at the state level when he was speaker of his state's legislature years ago. But he appeared skeptical of the merits of a deregulation that's too broad.

"Just walking away and turning a blind eye toward it, I don't think that'd be a good idea," he told USA TODAY.

The worries in the GOP are significant, especially given that meaningful pushback on Capitol Hill, particularly from key Republicans in the Senate, can become one of the most effective forms of resistance to Trump administration policies. Similar objections among people like Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican and the powerful chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, to eliminating Head Start were arguably what ultimately saved it last year.

Sen. Jim Justice, R-West Virginia, cautioned that though he supports making improvements to the program, it's already helping "a lot, a lot, a lot of kids" who "benefit phenomenally."

"When we start tweaking with stuff, a lot of times we can make it better," he said in a brief interview. "But there are ways we can make it worse, too."

Cutting red tape vs. declaring war

In Kennedy's eyes, the new effort will streamline Head Start, which serves hundreds of thousands of low-income families, and cut red tape – all while expanding the number of enrolled kids.

Alex Adams, one of Kennedy's deputies who runs an HHS division called the Administration for Children and Families, stressed on a recent call with reporters that Head Start providers will still be subject to state and local regulations. Just because they'll have fewer federal rules to follow doesn't mean they should ignore what works for them, he said.

"Flexibility is permission. It's not a mandate," he said.

Democrats bristled at that notion.

"They're saying they might be able to serve more children by promising each child less," Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington, said. "President Trump has all but declared war on Head Start."

Cassidy looking into changes

Sen. Bill Cassidy, the chairman of the Senate health and education committee, which has jurisdiction over Head Start, said he's been talking with his staff about the major proposed regulatory changes. In the thick of a political fight to confirm Todd Blanche as attorney general, he said Aug. 6 he hadn't fully delved into them yet.

"I'd like to see what they actually put out," he told USA TODAY.

The 75-page proposed rule, officially published Aug. 7 in the Federal Register, isn't all deregulation. It includes new rules, too. English would become the main language of instruction, and kids with a different first language would need to learn it while enrolled. There are also fresh dietary guidelines and an exercise directive: 30 minutes of physical activity for every 3.5 hours of classroom instruction.

The regulatory process is still in its early stages, though. And the proposal may get tied up in court. Khari Garvin, who ran the Office of Head Start in the Biden administration, stressed that there will be a 60-day public comment period. His message to any concerned families or teachers: "There still is an opportunity for their voices to be heard."

"No one should surrender and feel like, well, all is done," he said.

Dems are late paying taxes on DC HQ

DNC: Issue procedural, not inability to pay bills

Erin Mansfield
USA TODAY

The Democratic Party owes the District of Columbia more than $300,000 in property taxes, interest and penalties on its flagship headquarters in Washington, USA TODAY has learned.

The debt has been building up for several months, according to copies of tax bills on the property, and now includes tens of thousands of dollars in penalties and interest, public records show.

A Democratic National Committee spokesperson told USA TODAY the problem was the result of a mistake, rather than financial difficulties, but the news comes amid ongoing turmoil over fundraising at the Democratic National Committee.

Voters head to the polls in less than 90 days to decide whether Democrats or Republicans should control Congress. With President Donald Trump's approval rating low, Democrats are poised to pick up seats in the House of Representatives and have a shot at winning the Senate.

However, the latest numbers show the Democratic Party with a fraction of the cash the Republican Party has, and Trump-backed candidates could stand to benefit from an additional $400 million that Trump has set aside in his own account but not yet spent.

The Democrats' headquarters building, valued at $12.1 million, is the home of the national party as well as the fundraising arms for Senate and House of Representatives races. It is located a couple of blocks from the U.S. Capitol.

The building was already the subject to controversy after the DNC took out a $15 million loan in October and put "current and future assets" up as collateral.

The problems with the Democrats' property taxes stretch back months, according to records available through the District of Columbia Office of Tax and Revenue.

A Feb. 17 property tax bill with the District of Columbia said the headquarters property account owed $147,000, including about $23,000 in penalties. That bill said the balance was due by March 31.

The bill also said the amount due would balloon to just under $166,700 if not paid until July 1. Additional records show that someone made an online property tax payment of just under $166,700 on July 23, but the payment was "reversed." Now, an Aug. 4 bill lists a penalty fee for nonsufficient funds.

Mia Ehrenberg, a spokesperson for the DNC, said the issue was procedural and not an indication that the Democrats can't pay their bills. She said the party is getting in touch with the District of Columbia to rectify the situation.

"The processing issue resulted from standard fraud prevention practices, and we are promptly addressing it," Ehrenberg told USA TODAY.

The original bill was for taxes owed for the first half of 2026. The Aug. 4 bill now lists taxes due for the second half of 2026 plus an amount for 2027 taxes for the business improvement district where the property is located.

The new total that the Democrats owe is $291,000 by Aug. 31, according to the bill. That number includes $35,000 in penalties, $9,000 in interest, and a $65 "NSF Penalty," potentially a reference to the reversed July 23 payment.

The property has also been hit with a separate, additional Aug. 4 bill for "public space rental." The document details nearly $22,000 in money owed, including $12,000 in prior years' liabilities.

Together, the amount the Democrats owed on the tax account of the District of Columbia's property at noon Aug. 6 was just over $313,000.

Despite raising more than $200 million in the past two years, the DNC reported in campaign finance documents that its financial situation was underwater: The DNC had $16.3 million in cash on June 30 compared with $18.5 million in debt.

For the same time period, the Republican National Committee reported $128.5 million in cash on hand and no debt.

Analog bags

Continued from Page 1A

Kasler started an analog bag as part of her New Year's resolution to spend more time away from social media and to work on her mental health.

Her bag includes a pink travel mahjong set, a puzzle, a Filofax organizer and a Louise Carmen – a leather-bound notebook with a cult following online.

"I've been really trying to take steps back because it's so easy to get consumed in TikTok [and] doom scrolling," Kasler says. "Putting all these things together that help me unplug and focus on real life hobbies."

Her bag currently has a cookbook – she recently got into sourdough baking – and she always carries a Sudoku book and murder mystery puzzle book inside.

It's also about the aesthetics

The bag is as much about aesthetics as hobbies. Trending videos show patterned bags adorned with beaded charms and plushies, like Sonny Angels and Labubu dolls, popping out of the sides.

The L.L. Bean Boat and Tote has emerged as the bag of choice, with people embroidering everything from their initials to phrases like "self care" on the cotton canvas totes. The company says sales are up more than 50% this year, and the best-selling month for the product occurred this spring. The company launched limited-edition "Analog" and "Off the Grid" monogrammed Boat and Totes.

Julia Lacayo's friends gifted her a "So Julia" embroidered tote for her 28th birthday, in reference to singer Charli XCX's lyrics.

The 29-year-old, who is based in New York, brings a journal for jotting down ideas, sunglasses, headphones, sunscreen, lip gloss and a book. She just finished Paul Murray's "The Bee Sting."

"I'll try to go to a park. I'll try to take myself to a bar, even just to read, because if I'm trying to read up in my house, I'm so much more tempted to grab my phone," Lacayo says.

nThe conversation about young people's screen addiction has become more mainstream in a post-COVID-19 world, brought on by books like Jonathan Haidt's "The Anxious Generation," schoolwide phone bans and the U.S. surgeon general's office warnings about loneliness and screen time.

At the same time, Gen Z is increasingly nostalgic. They're struggling with decreasing social infrastructures and are disillusioned with the state of their finances, a growing political divide and a job market overshadowed by artificial intelligence.

Clay Routledge, a psychologist who studies nostalgia, says people long for a time when socializing felt more organic, and they are thinking about how to bring the technology of that era into their lives.

"There's something about mining the past, for what seems on the surface like objects, but it's really more about a vibe or an energy from that time," he says.

Young people are increasingly embracing flip phones and landlines in place of their smartphones – traffic on the website Dumbphone Finder jumped 12-fold from 2022 to 2025, according to the site's founder, Jose Briones.

Walkman sales are up 111% and instant film cameras 157%, according to Afterpay's Spring/Summer 2026 Trends Report. Pinterest Predicts' 2026 report found searches for "snail mail gifts" are up 110% on the platform. Eventbrite in June declared it "The Offline Summer."

"Young people are saying, 'Hey, we're frustrated with all the negativity, all the pessimism, feeling like just addicted or too dependent on these technologies, and we're doing something about it,' " Routledge says.

Kasler acknowledges it's "kind of ironic" to post about an analog bag online. But she also says it's become a way for her and her friends to connect about hobbies.

"We'll text each other, 'Oh my gosh, look at this new puzzle book' or 'Oh, I just started reading this book, you should put it in your analog bag,' " Kasler says.

Moving forward with 'optimism'

Peyton Mader, 26, isn't on social media and uses a Nokia 2780 flip phone. She didn't know she was doing something trendy until others brought up the name of the movement, but she's glad offline activities are having a mainstream moment.

She brings her analog bag, which includes the physical calendar she used to replace Google calendar and a notebook for daily observations, "pretty much everywhere."

She likes to add something "whimsical" each time. On a July evening during a phone-free gathering in New York's Fort Greene Park, she pulls out Henrie, a needle-felted opossum.

"It's fun to see so many people just kind of independently find their way to something like that," Mader says.

Routledge says nostalgia can function as an internal psychological resource that helps us move forward with "optimism" and "more sense of meaning." For Gen Z, that inspiration from the past is translating into more control in their lives, and a social component where people connect through shared hobbies.

"It's not either no technology or technology," Routledge says. "It's the story of young people wanting to use their agency to figure out a healthier relationship with technology."

Rachel Hale's role covering Youth Mental Health at USA TODAY is supported by a partnership with Pivotal Ventures and Journalism Funding Partners. Funders do not provide editorial input.

Wildfires

Continued from Page 1A

wildland firefighters say they see far more often now than they did 20 years ago. They have warned for years that fire conditions are changing.

In the Pacific Northwest, where more than half the uncontained fires are burning, dangerous conditions were expected to persist, with hot temperatures and dry, gusty winds like those that helped spread the Spokane fires. Though most of the fires in Oregon and Washington have been attributed to natural causes, one suspect has been charged with arson in the Old Trails fire in Spokane.

"Hot, dry, and windy in the short term seems to always be the familiar trigger and also pre-existing severe to extreme drought," Swain said in a briefing on his Weather West page. "We just have been seeing that pattern unfold over and over and over again."

House after house, block after block, devastation is "a recurring pattern we're seeing ... starting in the second decade of the 21st century and now continuing essentially every year," Swain said.

When fires burn the first house on the edge of a subdivision and the flames start spreading from house to house, it's no longer a wildfire, said Bobbie Scopa, a retired fire operations chief, author and host of the Bobbi on Fire podcast. It's an "urban conflagration."

A U.S. Geological Survey study released in December 2025 analyzed fires that destroyed 10 or more structures in the nation during the years 2002 to 2022. Half those fires occurred over the most recent seven years. Of the more than 98 fires that destroyed more than 100 homes, two-thirds hit over those seven years.

The question is: When will the next fire reach a vulnerable community at the moment when weather and climate conditions are at their worst?

On Aug. 6, firefighters were working to control 86 uncontained large fires in 14 states, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. A day earlier, 100 new wildfires were reported across the country.

Large fires on the rise

In the early years of her 44-year firefighting career, Scopa remembers a boss on a 12,000-acre blaze telling her she might never see a fire that large again.

"Now a 12,000-acre fire doesn't even raise an eyebrow," Scopa told USA TODAY. "Huge, fast-moving fires happen all the time now, whereas in the old days, they happened very, very seldom."

Fire seasons are longer and wildfires start earlier, Scopa said, which means they can burn longer and grow larger.

The Gann Fire, seen Aug. 4, has now burned more than 10,000 acres in Calaveras County, California. Hot and dry conditions contributed. PROVIDED BY CAL FIRE

> **"We can't say that every event is affected by climate change. But increasingly, studies show climate change is playing a role."**
>
> **Jennifer Marlon**
> Yale School of the Environment

Fuel for the flames dries out, and that leads to more extreme fire behavior, which leads to bigger fires.

The longer, more active fire seasons don't just affect those who live in the path of the flames. Heavy plumes of smoke, like those seen in the Northwest in early August, carry the consequences of large fires well beyond their marked perimeters.

One recent study found that wildfire emissions have increased so much they have erased some of the progress made in recent decades on ozone levels. A study for the Society of Actuaries found that pollutants in wildfire smoke may contribute to illness months or even years after initial exposure.

Is climate change to blame?

Dozens of the major fires are burning in the Northwest after a record-breaking snow drought that wouldn't have been as intense or lasted as long without climate change, said Jennifer Marlon, a senior research scientist at the Yale School of the Environment.

To be clear, the fires can't be solely blamed on any one thing, Marlon said. A combination of factors leads to catastrophic fires, including natural weather events, climate change and the increasing exposure and vulnerability of people and buildings in harm's way.

Fire seasons are longer and droughts are more intense, Marlon said. Growing numbers of people are moving into woodsy areas, and people and their communities are more vulnerable and not as fire-resilient as they need to be, she said.

"We can't say that every event is affected by climate change," Marlon said. But increasingly, studies show climate change is playing a role in intensifying natural weather events.

"I think of climate change as an amplifier of what would have occurred anyway," she said. "The Spokane fires may have occurred regardless of climate change, but it almost certainly would not have become as severe and grew as quickly and been as catastrophic if the vegetation wasn't as dry as it was.

"It's becoming really, really obvious that the planet is warming and that we are causing it and we have to do something about it. Not talking about climate change is very dangerous."

Will things will get better?

A suite of questions related to fighting wildfires need to be addressed, including forest management policies, wildfire fighting strategies, and staffing and funding, Scopa said.

For people who live in fire-prone areas, steps can be taken to help protect their own lives and properties. Strategies include roof and gutter maintenance and keeping fire-prone greenery, shrubs and mulch away from the home.

But even the best-protected home can be consumed by conflagrations and huge fires.

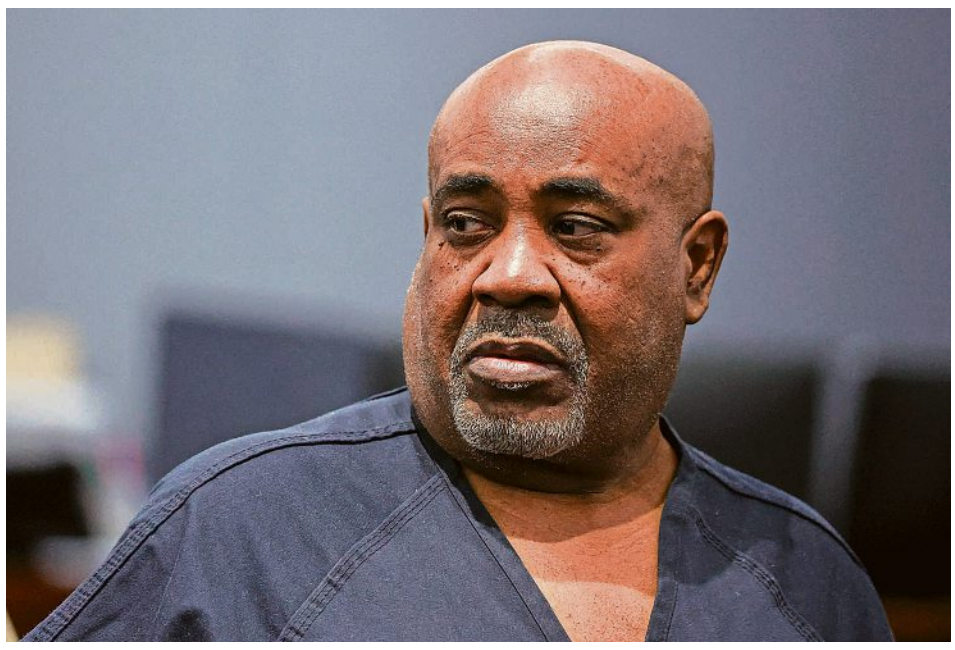
The problem "isn't just climate change," Swain said. "It's different combinations of all of these things, in different places to different degrees.

"And by ignoring any of them, we're ignoring an important part of the problem."

Witness list in Tupac case is star-studded

Nevada's governor, Knight could testify

Liza Esquibias
USA TODAY


Duane Davis attends a hearing for the Tupac Shakur murder trial on Aug. 4, 2026, in Las Vegas. ETHAN MILLER/VIA REUTERS

The official witness list for Duane Keith "Keffe D" Davis' looming trial in the shooting death of hip-hop superstar Tupac Shakur in 1996 has been released.

The trial is set to begin Monday, Aug. 10, and last through September, during which prosecutors in Clark County, Nevada, plan to call several people to the stand, according to an Aug. 4 supplemental witness list obtained by USA TODAY.

The filing reportedly includes more than 200 names, including Sean "Diddy" Combs' former bodyguard and Death Row Records cofounder Marion "Suge" Knight, who has said he "wouldn't testify."

Shakur was killed Sept. 7, 1996, in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas. Nearly three decades later, Davis faces one count of murder with a deadly weapon with the intent to promote, further or assist a criminal gang. Prosecutors say he provided the weapon and is the person who instructed the South Side Crips street gang to shoot from the car. He has pleaded not guilty.

Here are some of the most notable potential witnesses in Tupac's murder trial.

Marion 'Suge' Knight

Former record exec Knight was in the car with Shakur the night of Sept. 7, 1996, when both were shot. The rapper died days later, and Knight survived.

At the time, Shakur was signed to music label Death Row Records, where cofounder Knight was CEO. The music executive and the label also were accused of being affiliated with the Bloods street gang in Los Angeles, a rival of the South Side Crips. Earlier on the night of the shooting, Shakur, Knight and members of the Bloods attacked the nephew of the then-leader of the Crips, defendant Duane Keith "Keffe D" Davis. Hours later, Shakur and Knight were shot in what many speculate was retaliation.

In the years since, Knight, who is serving an unrelated 28-year prison sentence for voluntary manslaughter in a 2015 hit-and-run, has not spoken about the incident. In 2023, he told TMZ, "I wouldn't testify, none of that." He added, "1000% I wouldn't go."

Kirk Burrowes

In September 1996, Kirk Burrowes was president of Bad Boy Records, which he cofounded with Diddy in 1993. The New York-based label was allegedly connected with the Crips gang and had a long-standing rivalry with Knight's Bloods-affiliated Death Row Records, which signed Shakur to a multimillion-dollar contract in 1995.

Conspiracies about the two labels' conflict grew even stronger when, about six months after Shakur died, Bad Boy rapper Biggie Smalls, also known as The Notorious B.I.G., was killed in a drive-by shooting in Los Angeles. Smalls, like Shakur, was at the height of his fame when he was murdered.

In a 2003 lawsuit, Burrowes alleged Combs "orchestrated" Shakur's shooting. In a civil suit filed last year, Burrowes said he "witnessed instances in which Combs expressed paranoia and frustration over Shakur's success, indicating a deep-seated need to diminish his rival's influence." The suit further said that "Combs allegedly made statements to insiders suggesting that Shakur's presence in the industry threatened his legacy, leading him to take increasingly aggressive measures to overshadow and eliminate competition."

Davis also said in an interview with police that Combs placed a $1 million hit on Shakur and Knight, according to a Drug Enforcement Administration report filed in court in 2025 and obtained by USA TODAY.

Combs has denied allegations of any involvement in Shakur's death, and a spokesperson for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department told USA TODAY Combs has never been a suspect.

Sean 'Diddy' Combs' bodyguard

Eugene "Gene" Deal was Combs' bodyguard at the time of Shakur's murder. He has spoken about the night of the shooting and the dynamics between Shakur and others in his circle in several interviews over the years.

Combs is serving a 50-month prison sentence for his conviction in July 2025 on two counts of transportation to engage in prostitution. Though Deal did not testify in the trial, he attended several days of the proceedings.

Reggie Wright Jr.

Reggie Wright Jr. is a former police officer in Compton, California, and was the head of security at Death Row Records in 1996. He testified before the grand jury that indicted Davis, saying he witnessed a heated exchange between Combs and Knight, who was allegedly touting Death Row Records' superiority to Bad Boy Records, in 1995.

"I was there, standing right there," Wright testified. "And [Combs] approached [Knight] like: 'Hey, what's going on? Why you dissing me in front of everybody like that?'"

Davis has accused Wright of orchestrating the shooting of Shakur and Knight, which Wright vehemently denied."Good luck finding someone saying that, that's credible," he told ABC in February 2025. "It's heartbreaking they keep dragging in my name. I didn't have anything to do with that. One of the worst days of my life when I heard that that happened."

Tupac Shakur's sister, Sekyiwa Shakur

Shakur's sister, Sekyiwa Shakur, is expected to testify, along with other members of the family, including his stepbrother Maurice "Mopreme" Shakur and cousin Katari Cox.

Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo

Joe Lombardo, a former Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department officer and sheriff, is now the Republican governor of Nevada. He took office shortly before Davis' arrest.

Attorney Ross Goodman

Ross Goodman is a prominent criminal defense attorney in Las Vegas who briefly appeared in court for Davis in the early stages of his case before official counsel was selected. Oscar Goodman, Ross Goodman's father and the mayor of Las Vegas from 1999 to 2011, is also on the witness list.

Yusuf Jah

Yusuf Jah was the coauthor of Davis' 2019 memoir, "Compton Street Legend: Notorious Keffe D's Street-Level Accounts of Tupac and Biggie Murders, Death Row Origins, Suge Knight, Puffy Combs, and Crooked Cops," in which Davis admitted being in the car and providing the weapon used to shoot Shakur. His team tried to have the book excluded from the trial, arguing Davis' account of the shooting could have been misrepresented because he had a coauthor. Prosecutors pushed back, saying "everything" was admissible because Davis "chose to release it to the public and profit off it," and he reviewed and approved the manuscript before publishing.

The judge ruled in the prosecution's favor, and the memoir will be presented during trial.

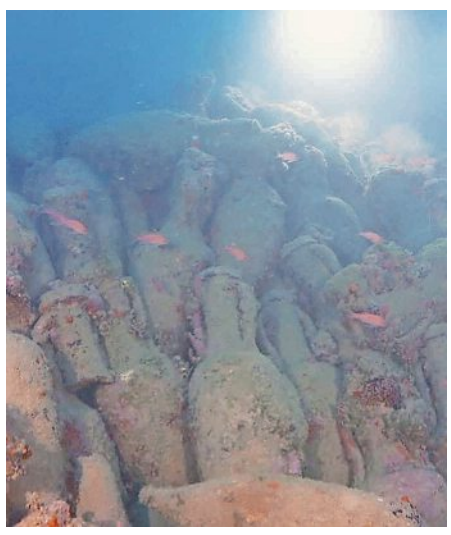
Former LAPD Detective Greg Kading

Greg Kading is a retired detective with the Los Angeles Police Department who spoke with Davis in 2009 while investigating the death of The Notorious B.I.G., whose case remains unsolved. During the interview, Davis allegedly confessed to his role in Shakur's murder. Davis' legal team, however, argued that it was an "involuntary confession" he made when "in a position that he was afraid for himself and his family." Davis also wrote in his book that he only "sang because they promised I would not be prosecuted."

Contributing: Gina Barton

Ancient Roman shipwreck is discovered by Italian divers

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY


A screenshot from the Italian Ministry of Culture showing an ancient Roman shipwreck discovered by divers off the coast of Sicily. PROVIDED BY THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF CULTURE

A group of Italian divers discovered a Roman shipwreck stocked with hundreds of ancient clay jars in the warm waters off the coast of Sicily, authorities said.

The ship is believed to date back to the second or first century B.C., according to the Italian Ministry of Culture. Divers located it about 3 miles off the coast of Mazara del Vallo, a city on the western coast of Sicily.

Alessandro Giuli, Italy's minister of culture, described it as "one of the most important underwater archaeological discoveries of recent years."

Videos posted online by the Ministry of Culture show divers swimming over hundreds of amphorae, clay jars used in ancient Greek and Roman societies to store goods like wine and olive oil.

Fisherman Giacomo De Mola said in an Instagram post that he and other divers were using sonar technology to survey the seafloor off the coast of Sicily when they came across "what looked like an ordinary rock."

He said something compelled him to get a closer look. At first, he thought the large mass was what he'd assumed: another big rock. But as he moved closer, an immense pile of ancient clay jars came into view.

"It is hard to describe the feeling of being among the first humans in nearly 20 centuries to see that place again," De Mola said.

The divers reported the discovery to the Sicilian Region's Superintendency of the Sea, a public body that oversees the identification and management of marine archeological sites off the island's coastal waters. An initial analysis found that the pile of amphorae is about 70 feet long, 20 feet wide and over 6 feet tall.

"This is, without a doubt, the most incredible discovery of my life," De Mola said.

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Dad of school shooter seeks new trial after conviction

Attorneys: Verdict was 'contrary to evidence'

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

Colin Gray, the Georgia father convicted after giving his teenage son the rifle used in a deadly high school shooting, is asking for a new trial less than a week after he was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Gray, 55, was convicted in March on 27 charges stemming from the Sept. 4, 2024, shooting at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia. Four people were killed: 14-year-old students Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo and teachers Richard Aspinwall, 39, and Cristina Irimie, 53.

Gray's attorneys filed a motion Wednesday arguing that the jury's verdict was not supported by the evidence, according to reports from AP and CBS News. They said the verdict was "contrary to evidence" and "strongly against the weight of the evidence," as well as contrary to law and the principles of justice and equity.

Colin Gray, 54, the father of Apalachee High School shooting suspect Colt Gray, 14, on Sept. 6, 2024, in Winder, Georgia. POOL/GETTY IMAGES

Why was Colin Gray convicted?

Prosecutors argued Gray should have recognized the danger posed by his son, Colt Gray, and taken steps to prevent him from accessing firearms.

Colin Gray acknowledged during his trial that he gave Colt the semiautomatic rifle as a Christmas present. Prosecutors said he ignored warning signs about his son's mental health and growing interest in school shootings.

Months before the shooting, a sheriff's deputy urged Gray to secure his guns after authorities investigated an alleged online threat to commit a school shooting. Officials could not definitively determine whether Colt made the threat.

A jury convicted Gray of second-degree murder in the deaths of Schermerhorn and Angulo and involuntary manslaughter in the deaths of Aspinwall and Irimie. He was also convicted of reckless conduct and cruelty to children.

The case marked the first time in Georgia that a parent of a school shooter was charged and convicted in connection with the child's attack.

What did the judge say?

During Gray's July 30 sentencing, Primm acknowledged the unusual nature of the case and said Gray did not intend to kill anyone. But the judge said warning signs surrounding Colt had become increasingly difficult to ignore.

"It is clear you failed as a parent," Primm said, according to CBS News.

Primm said Gray could have secured the family's guns and ammunition, removed the weapons or sought mental health treatment for his son.

Primm also noted that Gray did not intend to hurt anyone and was not the person who fired the gun.

"It matters that you didn't seek to harm anyone," Primm said. "It matters that you didn't pull a trigger."

What happened to Colt Gray?

Colt Gray, who was 14 when the shooting occurred, pleaded guilty in July to all 55 charges against him, including murder, aggravated assault and cruelty to children. Primm sentenced him to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Hong

Continued from Page 1A

she will likely run against Republican Tom Tiffany, who is facing nominal opposition on the GOP side.

Amid President Donald Trump's growing unpopularity, Republican candidates on the Badger State ballot say that a controversial Democratic nominee at the top of the other side of the ticket would give the GOP a helpful boost.

"It makes it easier to contrast [because] we're not right versus left or Republican versus Democrat, we're literally capitalist versus communist – and that's terrifying," Rep. Derrick Van Orden, R-Wisconsin, who is seeking reelection in a toss-up district, told USA TODAY.

Hong disavows parts of DSA platform amid scrutiny

In a roughly 25-minute interview with USA TODAY, Hong said Americans are looking for a "new type of politics" and that her campaign's success in the polls is related to a larger frustration with the country's economic woes.

She said Trump's return to power and aggressive use of executive authority have awakened more progressive-minded voters on how quickly things can change.

"Progressives have presented not only an alternative, but the fact that hey, maybe it's time we do something new, so we don't come back to these moments where people like him can get into power," Hong said.

But Republicans have already launched fiery responses early against the prospect of Hong being the Democratic nominee, highlighting those old social media posts: "Cancel Thanksgiving," Hong said in a post on X, then known as Twitter. "Should have done this in 1621."

She has deleted the criticism of Thanksgiving, but the others remain online.

In a Feb. 14, 2022, post on X, Hong said she missed working in a restaurant every day, "except on VDay," before launching into a criticism of the holiday's capitalist underpinnings.

"As if we weren't invisible enough to those who don't recognize the emotional [and] physical labor of service work, the worst of humanity comes out from folks 'celebrating' on another day capitalism tells you how to show love," she said.

Hong described being "on the verge of a anxiety attack" at a restaurant in a July 2, 2019, social media post due to the number of "old white people who didn't think we spoke English."

The missteps arrive at a time when the Democratic Socialists of America platform – which includes a call to ditch the U.S. Senate – is receiving sharper scrutiny.

During the discussion, Hong, who is a member of the local Madison, Wisconsin DSA chapter, at several points said she parted ways with elements of the national platform, which the group laid out at its July convention.

Among the calls for "building a new society from the ground up" were expanding voting rights to include all permanent residents, publicly financing elections and expanding access to social services such as Medicare. Other aspects of that agenda include abolishing borders, prisons and the U.S. Senate, which Republicans have spotlighted as too radical for average Americans.

"These people are insane," Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said in a July 27 post on X in response to a Fox News interview with Megan Romer, a DSA cochair.

Gubernatorial candidate Francesca Hong speaks during the Wisconsin Democrats 2026 Convention on June 14 in Madison.
DANIEL BOCZARSKI/GETTY IMAGES FOR WISDEMS

Hong said that as governor, she would want to focus on "delivering for people the policies that improve the material conditions of their lives." She said abolishing prisons and law enforcement, however, "is not going to help us do that," especially for those struggling economically.

"I think when someone is unsafe for community, that removing them from community is a practical and sensible solution," Hong said when asked about getting rid of prisons.

Democrats and GOP question Hong's positions, abilities

Hong's backpedaling on her more controversial stances comes at a critical juncture for democratic socialists and the larger progressive movement.

Wins in deeply liberal areas in New York City, Denver and Washington, DC, have raised their profile. Those victories are expanding into swing states such as Michigan, where Abdul El-Sayed – a progressive backed by prominent democratic socialists, but not one himself – prevailed in the Senate primary over a more moderate opponent.

That comes with sharper scrutiny and new challenges, experts and opponents say.

Megan Novak, state director for Americans for Prosperity, a conservative-leaning advocacy group, said Wisconsin's race for governor will be close no matter the contenders.

She said Hong has trekked off a political cliff in the state, which Trump won by less than 1 percentage point in 2024.

"People are concerned about the future for their kids, and if we have a candidate who now has spent what four or five days flip-flopping on whether or not she likes Thanksgiving, it just shows that voters are not going to be able to trust her on the issues that they care most deeply about," Novak said.

Conservative activists were already pummeling Hong by attacking her own plans, which include upending the nation's first taxpayer-funded private school voucher program that began in Milwaukee in 1990.

Roughly 30,000 students are enrolled in schools using a voucher, according to state officials, a system both Crowley and Tiffany oppose changing.

"That's tens of thousands of children across the state, especially in Milwaukee where thousands of mostly Black and Hispanic children would be ripped out of their school overnight," Novak said.

Peter Dreier, a political science professor at Occidental College who is considered one of the foremost experts on socialism, said Hong is being thrust onto a much larger stage and she's made some "rookie errors" in presenting herself.

"There's a difference between movements and campaigns," he said. "DSA is both a movement, which has broad views about where they would like the country to go, and it's also got politicians that need to get elected."

"Sometimes those two things are in conflict," he added. "The movement part gets people excited, enthusiastic. … But in a campaign you have to be a retail politician who can sell your product."

In general, democratic socialism is defined as a belief that the economy should be democratically run for the benefit of the public. But opponents commonly connect it to communism, an authoritarian system associated with brutal regimes such as the Soviet Union and Cuba that believes the working class should take control through violent revolution.

On its website, DSA describes it as a "system where ordinary people have a real voice" in workplaces and neighborhoods.

But a July Reuters/Ipsos poll found just 23% of Americans said they understand the policies and positions of democratic socialists extremely or very well. Only 21% of Democrats and Democratic leaning voters said the same.

Democrat Bakari Sellers, a CNN political analyst, said democratic socialists and other uber-progressive candidates must learn to be more disciplined if they're going to win in competitive districts or states. He said it appears Hong is "running to be famous," and that she isn't as politically gifted as other contenders, such as El-Sayed, running in 2026.

"They're on a learning curve when it comes to messaging, but also that curve is on the side of a mountain because it's out of the mainstream," Sellers, a South Carolina native, told USA TODAY.

"We're talking about health care, and we're talking about affordability," he added. "Stick to those things. But abolishing the police, banning Thanksgiving, them things – we don't talk about those things in South Carolina."

'Duke it out': Hong voters worry about November outcome

For Democrats concerned that Hong will cough up the Badger State's gubernatorial seat, their gaze is turning toward Crowley, Milwaukee County's first Black executive, who is considered her most viable foe.

Crowley reentered the race last month with a powerful ally – term-limited Gov. Tony Evers – by his side. He said part of the reason for jumping back in the race was Hong's stumbles. He has minimized policy differences with Hong, instead focusing on how too much is at stake in this election to be "caught up in distractions and talking about past Twitter statements."

The 40-year-old former state lawmaker has raked in union endorsements while pushing back against characterizations that he's part of the party establishment, calling that description "a slur" in recent interviews.

"When I hear that term, it frustrates me because I have worked my entire life not to be placed in a box and continue to protect those who grew up in the same circumstances as me," Crowley, whose parents struggled with substance abuse, told USA TODAY.

"We're confusing those who have worked so hard and got to where they are as the establishment."

Hong has held a double-digit lead in statewide polling of the field, but a sizable 34% of Democratic voters remained undecided in the most recent Marquette University Law School poll.

The Crowley campaign is sprinting across the state making appeals to Democrats still on the fence, and they've mocked Hong's previous comments about Thanksgiving, saying in an Aug. 6 statement that she "cannot talk turkey without reversing herself" in interviews.

At a busy early voting site on Madison's north side, even some of Hong's supporters bristled at some of her controversial positions.

"I do wish she would tone it down a little bit, but I'm not opposed to the things she says," Chad Norquist, 48, a maintenance mechanic from Madison, told the USA TODAY Network. "I think it's pretty good for people to hear stuff like that – doesn't shock me at all."

Hong's lead appears all but insurmountable, according to the Marquette poll and an internal survey released this week by Crowley's campaign that showed Hong leading by 20 percentage points.

Among the voters polled, those over age 60 were less likely to support Hong, whose most passionate supporters are younger, between 18 and 29.

Blake Vanniel, 28, of Madison, said that's, in part, because he has a negative view of the Democratic Party, which he suggested needs a fresh generation of contenders. He is supporting Hong as a vote "against the establishment."

"The primary season is for when you're supposed to duke it out with your inner party and have those fights, but I think it's pretty clear what voters want," he said.

"They want politicians that are actually going to fight for the working people and not be beholden to the same corporate interests that fund the other side and fund all the horrible stuff."

Most voters interviewed by the USA TODAY Network heading into the Aug. 11 primary election emphasized they did not support Hong's past positions. Some described many of the more radical DSA ideas as unrealistic or ideological tests.

"I think the mainstream candidates have a better chance of beating Republicans," said Tom Kapper, 61, of Madison. "I personally am more progressive and lean that direction, but I think, in the current climate, they would have a hard time coming in the general election."

Phillip M. Bailey reports for USA TODAY, and Molly Beck and Clara Strecker report for the Milwaukee Journal.

OPINION

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Dems heading for their own Tea Party moment

Dace Potas
USA TODAY

From left, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, future New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani and U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-New York, campaign on Oct. 26, 2025, in Queens. ANDRES KUDACKI/GETTY IMAGES

A new political movement has come along, frustrated with the party establishment's inability to resist a radical president and worsening economic conditions. This energy has already produced upset wins in party primaries.

I'm referring to the Tea Party movement that transformed the Republican Party during the beginning of Barack Obama's presidency. But you'd be forgiven for thinking I was talking about Democrats today. The similarities are striking, and what happened to the GOP then should serve as a warning.

The Republican Party's transformation into its Trumpian form didn't come from nowhere. The road was paved by the Tea Party movement and the anti-establishment energy it unleashed.

Democratic voters are dabbling with that same energy now, elevating democratic socialists and other outsider candidates. They're priming their party for a similar takeover heading into the 2028 presidential election.

What happened to GOP in 2010

After the 2009 financial crisis, the Tea Party emerged as the rising counter to President Obama. Republican voters were frustrated with the establishment's inability to block Obama's agenda, namely the Affordable Care Act.

That movement propelled Republicans to retake the House in the 2010 midterm elections, with then-rising stars like Sens. Marco Rubio and Rand Paul riding the wave to victory alongside 87 freshman House Republicans.

Those frustrations intensified in 2012, when the GOP nominated establishment favorite Mitt Romney for president and lost another winnable election, and as House Speaker John Boehner struggled to counter Obama's aggressive use of executive power.

It set the stage for Donald Trump to serve as the wrecking ball against the Republican establishment.

Trump ran as a populist rebel, skeptical of foreign intervention, free trade and the pro-immigration status quo. But most important, he didn't talk like a politician, and he had no problem hurling insults at his opponents, including in the media. Trump branded himself a fighter willing to do whatever was necessary, and Republican voters loved it.

The parallels to what's happening with Democrats are uncanny. Democratic voters are frustrated with their party's inability to counter President Trump: 67% reported feeling frustrated with their own party last fall, up from 48% in 2021, and that number only seems to be climbing heading into the November elections.

Antiestablishment candidates have been performing well in Democratic primaries ever since Zohran Mamdani's victory in New York's mayoral election in 2025:

- Graham Platner, before withdrawing amid sexual assault allegations, was running a strong campaign against Republican Sen. Susan Collins in Maine.
- Abdul El-Sayed won the nomination for U.S. Senate in Michigan over more established rivals.
- Other outsider candidates across the country are mounting strong runs.

These candidates tap into voter frustration and direct the blame at billionaires, establishment politicians, Republicans or whichever group is convenient to demonize. Policywise, they tend to share an interest in wealth redistribution and universal health care.

In a 2025 open-ended poll, the word that came to many Democrats' minds first when describing their party was "weak," "ineffective" or a synonym. Even when Democrats did hold power, their voters were frustrated with what the party did with it. In 2021, 49% wanted to reform the filibuster, and 30% wanted it gone.

Now, Democrats are even turning against Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer after he voted to keep the government open in spring 2025 and after eight Democratic senators voted in November to end another government shutdown, a move many Democrats saw as caving.

Democratic voters appear ready for change, and they might even welcome a Trump-like figure to transform their party, and the establishment doesn't look able to stop it.

The new ascending Democratic candidates are characterized as combative, uninterested in compromise and more eager to wield power than follow norms once given the chance.

Voters are energized. They want leaders who are willing to enact their agenda by any means necessary, because that's what they believe their opponents are already doing. They're sick of compromise because they don't think the other side will reciprocate.

The Republican establishment of the Obama era was similarly seen as too weak to use power effectively, even if it meant violating norms. Actions like Senate Democrats eliminating the filibuster for lower-court nominations frustrated GOP voters who thought their party lacked the courage to do the same.

That's the same force driving today's socialist and "working class" Democratic candidates heading into the midterm elections. As Trump wields power unapologetically to crush his opponents, Democrats wonder why their own party can't do the same.

How will Democrats vote in November elections, or in 2028?

The battle ground is right for a new kind of leader to rise within the Democratic Party heading into 2028. One choice is Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-New York, one of the most politically talented advocates whom democratic socialism has produced, with all the hallmarks of an outsider ready to make a run at the highest office.

Only a third of Democrats like political leaders who identify as democratic socialists. Nonetheless, the climate is right for Democrats to lose their party to the fringe.

Voters are already revolting against the establishment, and the success of these candidates could reshape the party entirely and propel an outsider to the White House.

Dace Potas is an opinion columnist for USA TODAY and a graduate of DePaul University with a degree in political science.

Let's take DSA influence on midterms with a sip of tea

Chris Brennan
USA TODAY

Recent primary election wins by some very progressive Democrats, including a few self-described democratic socialists, have rekindled a cautionary tale, comparing that to political insurgent Republicans in 2010 who became the Tea Party movement.

I'm not buying it. The scale is way off. But this smaller movement could influence our next presidential election.

The Tea Party coalition, before it was co-opted by political consultants, was much larger, better funded and far more organized. A 2010 New York Times analysis found 139 Tea Party Republicans seeking seats in the House and Senate that year.

For the November midterm elections, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) party has endorsed just three candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives. Two of them, Pennsylvania lawmaker Chris Rabb of Philadelphia and Melat Kiros of Denver, won their primaries. The third, Oliver Larkin of Florida, is on the Aug. 18 primary ballot.

Local DSA chapters have also endorsed nine other House candidates in eight states. Two of them, former U.S. Rep. Cori Bush and Hartzell Gray, were defeated in Missouri's Aug. 4 Democratic primary. In Michigan's Aug. 4 primary, Kyle Blomquist was defeated while Donavan McKinney won the Democratic nomination.

This is not what the Tea Party looked like or sounded like during the midterm elections 16 years ago.

Larry Sabato, who's director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, told me that "the 'democratic socialist' movement within the Democratic Party is tiny compared to the Tea Party in 2010."

And Sabato questioned "how much difference" the few democratic socialists will make in the next Congress.

That's not to say this movement will not grow into something much larger. But we're not there yet.

The more likely outcome right now – and the thing I think we need to start paying attention to – is whether democratic socialists or Democrats who reject that label while embracing its politics have an impact on the 2028 presidential nomination.

Which brings us to Abdul El-Sayed, an epidemiologist and former Detroit public health official who won the Aug. 4 Michigan primary for the U.S. Senate with a very progressive campaign message. El-Sayed has said that he does not identify as a democratic socialist, even as President Donald Trump desperately tries to brand him as a "communist."

'Would-be Bernies'

William Galston, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, told me that a democratic socialist or "DSA adjacent" candidate could "move the Democratic Party significantly in their direction over the next two years."

"I'd say there's a real chance of that, and the odds of that will soar if Abdul El-Sayed wins the Michigan Senate race," Galston said. "That would be a political earthquake. It would guarantee that a top-tier DSA or DSA-adjacent candidate for the presidential nomination would emerge. I think that's already very likely, anyway."

He put it like this: Imagine if two well-known moderate Democrats with obvious presidential ambitions, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, shared a stage in a 2028 debate with the best-known democratic socialist in the House, U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York.

"The mind reels, but it would be a hell of a show," Galston said. "And I don't think that scenario is at all unlikely."

Abdul El-Sayed, Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate, addresses a unity rally in Detroit on Aug. 7.
REBECCA COOK/REUTERS

U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the best-known democratic socialist in the Senate, had a dramatic impact on the 2016 Democratic presidential primaries, pulling Hillary Clinton to the left until she won the nomination.

Nicholas Beauchamp, an associate professor of political science at Northeastern University, envisions a 2028 Democratic cast of candidates crowded with would-be Bernies potentially canceling each other out, to the benefit of more moderate candidates.

"In which case, it becomes this difficult thing for all the sort of energy of antiestablishment, anti-incumbent, anti-old guard Democrats to sort of focus," Beauchamp told me, adding that for moderate Democrats, "the best case scenario for them is that like all of this position fractures across a whole bunch of different opponents, and you know they can sort of work the the center left-lanes better."

I live in the Philadelphia congressional district where Rabb, a democratic socialist and DSA member, decisively won the May 19 Democratic primary.

No Republican ran in the district, making Rabb a very likely victor in the Nov. 3 election.

Rabb told me in June that the dust-ups in the Democratic Party about progressives and socialists were "an internal skirmish here that can either become a full-blown war, or it could be a pivot point" to a more unified party.

The Democratic National Committee and the Senate Majority PAC touted El-Sayed's win, and former Vice President Kamala Harris has started a fundraising effort to assist him.

Where's the Tea Party now?

Americans for Prosperity Action, one of the political action committees that organized and then co-opted the Tea Party, issued an Aug. 5 memo headlined, "El-Sayed's Michigan Win Puts DSA Agenda on the Ballot Nationwide."

And Vice President JD Vance, a likely contender for the 2028 Republican nomination for president, on Aug. 5 blurted out this warning: "God forbid, you're gonna have President El-Sayed in three years."

That fear is real on the Republican side of the ballot for a progressive surge fueled by outrage about Trump. Will that tension remain on the Democratic side of the ballot for the 2026 election, and in two years?

The Tea Party's demise might illustrate what comes next.

Beauchamp noted that the insurgent Republican movement started to "fizzle out" about 2014, but that Trump was able to co-opt its energy a year later when he first ran for president.

Trump remade the Tea Party in his own MAGA image. The next Democratic nominee for president could do the same with the progressive and democratic socialist energy.

You can follow USA TODAY columnist Chris Brennan on the Bluesky platform, @bychrisbrennan.bsky.social, and on X, @ByChrisBrennan.

USA TODAY

"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation." – Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

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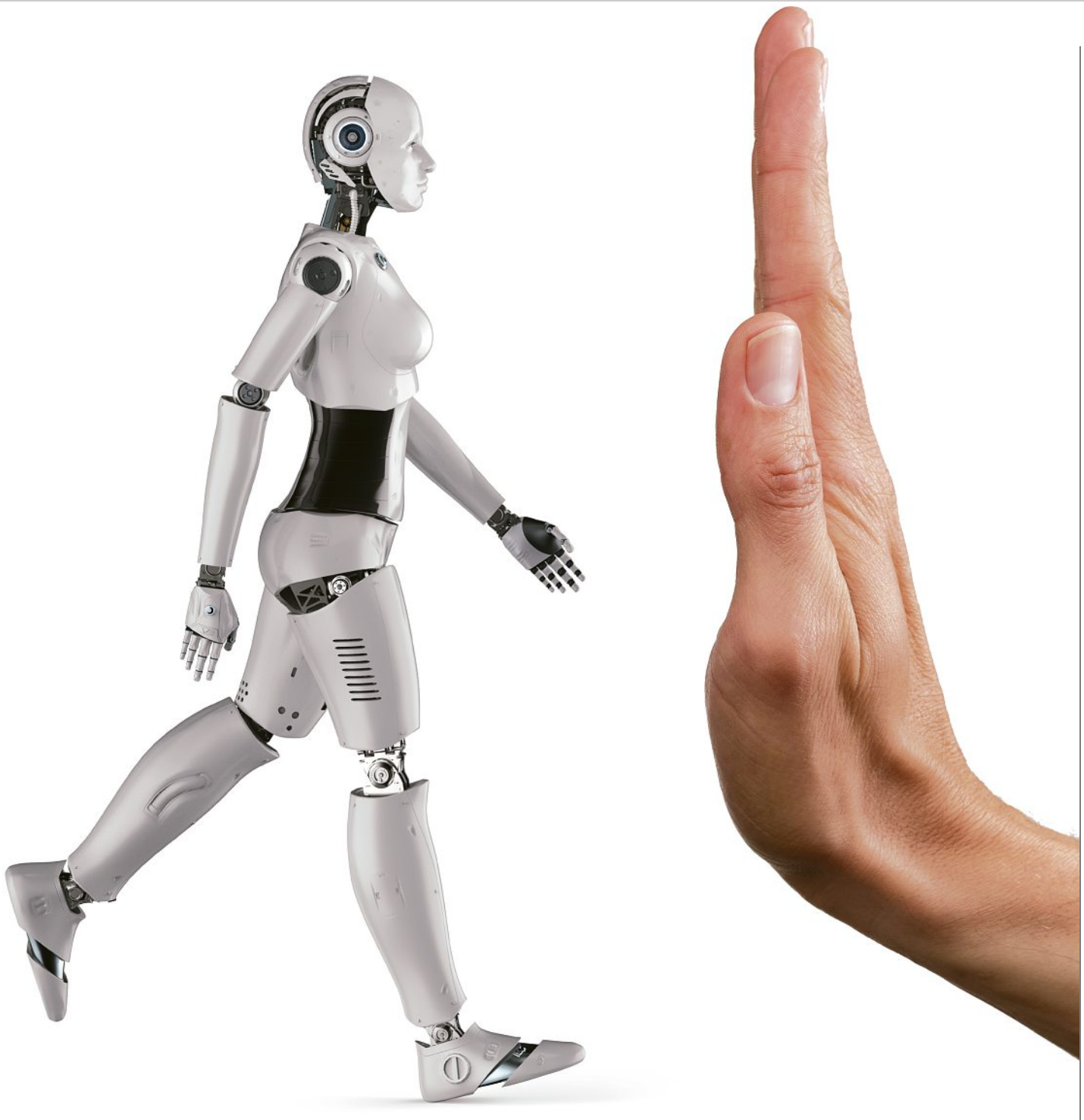
Ask Johnny offers tip on how to fix employee retention

Leadership transitions are one of the clearest tests of an organization's strength. **Page 4B**



Think Before You Prompt

A one-man chatbot wants you to stop blindly trusting AI

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ABEL MUÑIZ MONTENEGRO/USA TODAY NETWORK; AND GETTY IMAGES

Jessica Guynn USA TODAY

In a world where we are accustomed to chatting up artificial intelligence, score one for the human touch.

A new billboard recently popped up in the colorful collage of boastful signs at the epicenter of the AI boom in San Francisco. This one for ChatTJB bragged it was promoting the "leading chatbot interface powered by AI."

Soon people began using the service. But AI, in this case, doesn't stand for artificial intelligence. It stands for "average individual." And that individual is just a guy named Tucker Bryant.

Bryant jokes he has developed "artisanal intelligence, handcrafted by a single human being" – a bespoke experience that is not an LLM, or large language model, but an LLE or "single-operator large language experience."

"Picture this: ChatGPT but, on the other end, it's just me giving bad advice," Bryant, a former Google staffer, explained on YouTube.

AI chatbots have become a part of daily life in America. We ask for information, advice, encouragement, therapy, even companionship. In fact, these synthetic helpers have become so ubiquitous that Bryant is worried about our dependence on them.

Too often, he says, we are letting chatbots think for us. So he's trying to raise awareness of "cognitive surrender" – a term from researchers at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Business School to describe how we blindly trust chatbots over our brains even when their advice can so often be faulty or false.

"We're now so used to confident, fast and smart-sounding answers from AI that we've largely stopped questioning them," he said. "Some of us are so far gone that the second we drop into that soothing dark interface, see the little thinking animation and the text coming up letter by letter, critical thinking skills go out the window."

At first he wanted to call his chatbot "BadGPT," but the domain was too pricey. So he settled for his own initials and

See CHATBOT, Page 2B

Americans need $110K per year to afford home

Mortgage rates eased slightly, but still over 6%

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

Americans still need to earn nearly $110,000 a year to comfortably afford the typical home for sale in the United States, even as housing affordability has shown modest signs of improvement over the past year.

A new Redfin report found that an American household would need an annual income of $109,796 to purchase a median-priced home in June while spending no more than 30% of that income on housing costs.

That's just 0.5% lower than the record high of $110,382 a year ago, meaning the income needed to buy a home has changed very little over the past year.

The stabilization comes as household incomes have continued to rise alongside home prices. Redfin estimates the median U.S. household earned $87,599 in June, up 4% from a year ago, while the median home sale price increased 2.2%.

Mortgage rates also have eased slightly but remained in the mid-6% range, keeping borrowing costs elevated.

Even with those gains, according to Redfin, the typical household still earns about $22,200 less than what's needed to purchase the median-priced home and be financially comfortable.

That's an improvement from the roughly $26,100 gap a year ago and nearly $28,900 two years ago, but it remains a significant hurdle for many prospective buyers.

Affordability remains a challenge

Redfin defines a home as affordable when a buyer with a 15% down payment spends no more than 30% of their monthly income on mortgage payments, property taxes and other housing costs.

"The earnings needed to buy a house have stabilized after several years of deterioration, but that doesn't mean homes are affordable to the average American," Redfin Senior Economist Yingqi Xu said in the report.

Xu said the market has become "a bit more manageable" for buyers because it is now a "buyer's market" in much of the country, giving shoppers more options and stronger negotiating power.

Even so, she said, many prospective first-time buyers remain on the sidelines because the typical household still earns far less than what's needed to afford a home and be financially comfortable.

Redfin economists said affordability could improve slightly by the end of the year; however, the real estate company warned it could worsen if interest rates rise more than expected, oil prices increase further or inflation accelerates.

See HOMES, Page 2B

Trump ends Medicare prescription subsidy

Millions could see higher costs on plans in 2027

Ken Alltucker
USA TODAY

Millions of older Americans on Medicare could see higher monthly prices on their prescription drug insurance plans in 2027 after the Trump administration ends a subsidy program that pushed down prices.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services officials said they were ending a Medicare prescription drug plan subsidy implemented by the Biden administration to lower prices because of changes ushered in by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

"The Biden admin gave billions of taxpayer money directly to big insurance companies. This is unacceptable," said CMS Administrator Mehmet Oz in a social media post announcing the policy change. "We are stabilizing the market so this bailout is no longer needed."

Oz said monthly premiums on Medicare prescription drug plans, known as Part D, will increase by less than $10 for most enrollees, and some will see lower premiums.

Medicare spent billions to lower Part D premiums in 2025, 2026

CMS will release details in September on monthly premiums for Medicare prescription drug plans, as well as privately administered Medicare Advantage plans, the agency said. Consumers can review and change plans during Medicare open enrollment, which runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7 for coverage that begins Jan. 1, 2027.

As of February, about 25 million people were in a stand-alone Medicare Part D plan, often paired with traditional government-run Medicare insurance. Another 31 million were in a Medicare Advantage plan – Medicare plans administered by a private insurance company that typically include prescription drug coverage.

A Trump administration official said the Inflation Reduction Act increased costs for prescription drug coverage. The climate and health care law imposed a $2,000 cap in 2025 on what Medicare enrollees paid out of pocket for prescription drugs. That cap increased to $2,100 in 2026.

Under the Biden administration, CMS created a "demonstration project" that steered subsidies to insurance companies to keep premiums lower. The project cost the federal government $9.8 billion in 2025 and 2026. Had it remained in place, one company, UnitedHealth Group, would have received a $1.5 billion, the Trump administration official said.

UnitedHealth Group spokesman Eric

See PART D, Page 2B

President Donald Trump greets Entrepreneur and Cost Plus Drug Company (MCCPDC) Co-Founder Mark Cuban in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on May 18 in Washington, DC. President Trump spoke on the TrumpRX site, prescription drugs, and health care affordability during the event.
CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

Claire's overhauling ear piercing experience

Store's reformed clinical training part of changes

Greta Cross
USA TODAY

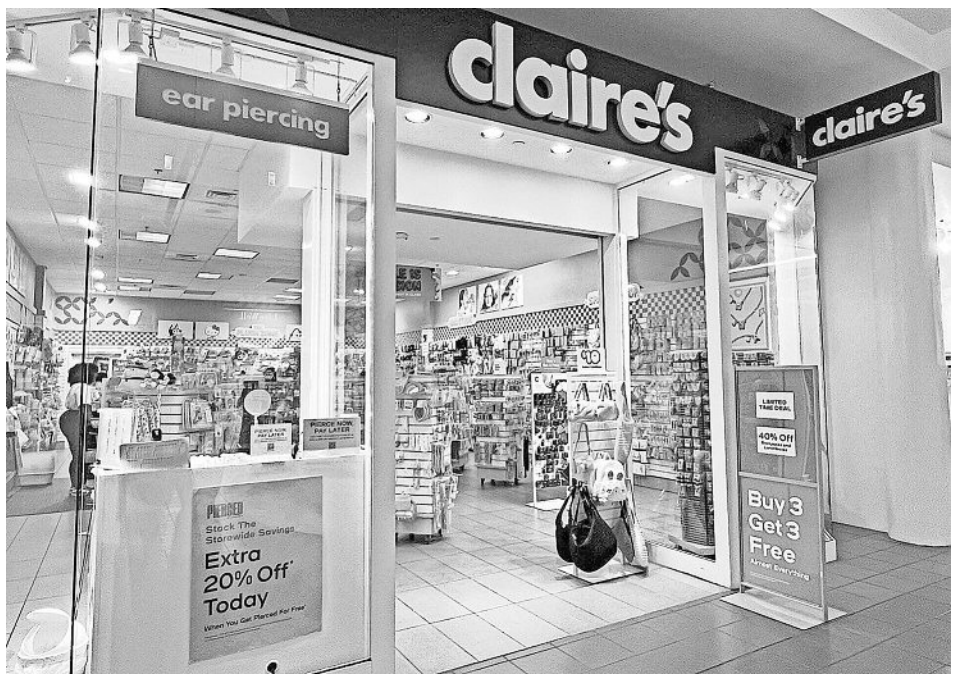
Claire's is looking to revamp its long-standing ear piercing experience with reformed clinical training, expanded jewelry options and an improved in-store experience.

Claire's announced on Aug. 6 how it is reimagining its ear piercing experience, rolling out across 900 Claire's in the United States and Canada this year.

The news comes after Claire's filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in August 2025 – the second time in seven years. The chain cited the rise of fast-fashion websites like Shein and Temu cutting into sales, in addition to rising interest rates, inflation and tariffs on goods from China.

A month after filing, private equity firm Ames Watson acquired Claire's for $140 million. In May, Claire's announced it was opening more than 7,000 new "touch points" in the United States. Rather than stand-alone stores, the expansion includes the sale of Claire's merchandise at other retailers like Walmart, Kohl's and CVS.

A women gets her ear pierced. GETTY IMAGES



Claire's announced on Aug. 6 how it is reimagining its ear piercing experience rolling out across 900 Claire's this year. HANNAROSE MCGUINNESS/USA TODAY NETWORK

Claire's says it's improving ear piercing training

A dedicated Piercing Excellence Team of 13 people was created to train Claire's piercing specialists through an "enhanced curriculum," including hands-on instruction, digital learning, guided practice, ongoing assessments and recertification, according to a news release. Compared with the previous training model, the new curriculum is more "comprehensive, consistent and hands-on," Carey Brezler, vice president of retail operations, told USA TODAY.

"Field leaders" were brought together for one-day immersive training led by the Piercing Excellence Team; then the training was brought back to store associates, Brezler said.

Over the years, Claire's has notoriously received backlash for how ears are pierced, with the use of a handheld device. Spring-loaded "piercing guns," which "shoots" an earring stud into the tissue, can raise concerns in terms of sterility, tissue damage and inappropriate design, according to the Association of Professional Piercers. In comparison, a needle piercing creates a small, clean slice into the tissue through which the piercing is then placed; a piercing gun uses force to shove a blunt piercing through the tissue.

Brezler told USA TODAY that Claire's does not use "piercing guns." Rather, the chain uses an FDA-registered hand-pressurized medical piercing device "designed to support a gentle and sterile piercing experience."

Expanded ear piercing collection, in-store experience

As part of the revamp, Claire's is offering more new piercing stud jewelry to choose from. The collection includes new styles in single studs and a premium selection of lab-grown diamonds, according to a news release. All ear piercing kits start at $30 and include a "free" piercing, jewelry and an aftercare kit.

Claire's piercing stations are also getting a new look, including the addition of an "interactive Inspiration Bar" that allows customers to look at different jewelry, snap selfies after piercings and choose from a variety of destressors to hold during the experience, according to a news release.

When will the changes come to Claire's stores?

The upgrades will roll out across 900 Claire's locations in the United States and Canada this year.

Claire's new ear piercing inspiration bar at the Santa Anita, California, location, which opened on Aug. 8. PROVIDED BY CLAIRE'S

Equifax $2.2M settlement: Do you qualify for payment?

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

Thousands of consumers could be eligible for a payment from a $2.2 million class action settlement involving credit reporting company Equifax after a lawsuit alleged duplicate collection accounts appeared on some consumers' credit reports.

The proposed settlement resolves claims that Equifax violated the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act by reporting the same collection account more than once on certain consumer credit reports in 2022. The duplicate reporting allegedly lowered some consumers' credit scores and, in some cases, affected their ability to obtain credit.

Equifax denies any wrongdoing or violation of the law, and the court has not determined who is right. The company agreed to settle the lawsuit to avoid the expense and uncertainty of further litigation. An estimated 37,000 consumers are part of the settlement class. Eligible class members who were notified by Equifax may qualify for cash payments and complimentary credit monitoring if the settlement receives final approval.

What is the Equifax settlement about?

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Georgia by plaintiff Charmayne Bradberry, who claimed Equifax reported the same collection account multiple times on her credit report.

According to the complaint, Bradberry discovered in 2022 that a $305 collection account appeared more than once on her Equifax credit report. She said the duplicate reporting caused her credit scores to drop significantly and contributed to the denial of a mortgage application. The lawsuit contends Equifax failed to follow reasonable procedures to ensure maximum possible accuracy, as required by the Fair Credit Reporting Act. Equifax denied the allegations.

Who qualifies for a payment?

Consumers may be eligible if they received a notice from Equifax because company records indicate they were part of the affected group.

According to the settlement, eligible consumers had a duplicate collection account appear on their Equifax consumer report when their credit report was requested during the period at issue in August and September 2022. Notices were mailed or emailed to affected consumers, and claimants must use the Notice ID, which begins with "EQB," and the PIN included in that notice to submit a claim.

If you qualify, how much money can you expect?

Consumers who submit valid claims affirming they were harmed by the duplicate reporting are expected to receive up to $600, although the final amount will depend on the number of approved claims. All settlement class members will also receive six months of Equifax Complete credit monitoring, including credit alerts and up to $500,000 in identity theft insurance coverage, without filing a claim.

Equifax also agreed to continue measures designed to prevent duplicate collection accounts from appearing on consumer reports and to remove any remaining duplicate accounts tied to the issue.

How can you file a claim?

Claims must be submitted through the official settlement website using the Notice ID and PIN from the settlement notice. Consumers may also print and mail a claim form.

The deadline to submit a claim is Sept. 1. A final approval hearing is scheduled for Oct. 6, and payments will be distributed only if the settlement receives final approval and any appeals are resolved.

Chatbot

Continued from Page 1B

began answering thousands of queries manually, much to the delight of thousands of users.

"Unlike ChatGPT, my answers will be slow. They probably won't be correct. Or maybe they could be, but they'll be very cryptic," Bryant said. "I want you to have such an inconvenient experience with something that aesthetically looks like artificial intelligence that the next time an LLM gives you what sounds like a reasonable answer, you remember the time ChatTJB responded to your tax question with a haiku about crows."

"No notes. Fantastic," one person commented on Reddit.

"Omg I love this. Just tried it out, way more interesting than ChatGPT that's for sure," another said.

Asked how he could afford the billboard, Bryant replied that he "dug deep" because he wanted one fewer billboard in San Francisco hawking "a real AI company."

If we all become "the tiniest bit" more likely to stop and think about the information fed to us by a "smooth-talking chatbot," then his work here is done, Bryant said. ChatTJB answers questions on everything from house paint colors to imposter syndrome.

With demand overwhelming Bryant, visitors are now greeted by this message: "Site is overwhelmed and so is average individual lol. We'll be back."

USA TODAY reached out to Bryant for comment. His current plan? He wants to turn the one-man query engine into a community project.

Homes

Continued from Page 1B

More listings are within reach

The report found buyers are spending a smaller share of their income on housing than a year ago. The typical homebuyer would need to spend 37.6% of their income on a median-priced home, down from 39.3% last year. Redfin said the decline comes as median household income increased from $84,257 to $87,599 while the income needed to afford a home remained largely unchanged.

Meanwhile, 34.2% of homes for sale were affordable for households earning the national median income in June, up from 30.5% a year earlier.

Even so, Redfin noted affordability remains well below levels before 2022, when more than half of listings were typically within reach of the median-income household.

Where affordability is improving

Affordability improved in 24 of the 46 major metro areas Redfin analyzed. Seattle saw the largest improvement, with the income needed to afford the typical home falling 7.4% from a year ago as home prices declined.

San Jose and Portland also saw some of the biggest drops: The income needed to afford a home fell 6.5% and 4.5%, respectively. Despite those improvements, homes in many West Coast markets remain out of reach for average earners.

San Francisco remained the nation's least affordable major metro: Buyers would need an annual income of $453,205 to afford the typical home.

Only three major metro areas, St. Louis, Indianapolis and Pittsburgh, had median household incomes that exceeded the income required to afford the typical local home, according to Redfin.

Part D

Continued from Page 1B

Hausman said the insurer is "committed to working with CMS to ensure seniors have access to affordable prescription medicines." But with the demonstration project now ended, some Part D recipients "could see a larger premium increase for drug coverage next year than they've faced in recent years," said Juliette Cubanski, vice president and director of the program on Medicare policy for KFF, a health policy nonprofit.

Under the Biden administration, the demonstration project aimed to stabilize Part D premiums and enrollment amid the changes from the Inflation Reduction Act. The average monthly premium for a stand-alone drug plan fell from $43 in 2024 to $36 in 2026, and enrollment increased from 23 million to 25 million, Cubanski said.

"This temporary demonstration appeared to work as intended to stabilize year-over-year premium increases and enrollment," Cubanski said.

Employers that provide insurance coverage for prescription drugs have cited rising medication prices and increased use as one reason insurance prices are accelerating.

On July 1, Medicare began covering popular GLP-1 weight-loss medications for millions of enrollees under a pilot program. Older adults who get the medications will pay a monthly $50 copay, and Medicare will cover the rest.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Prattville: In a move that's been described as heartbreaking, Prattville Pride, a support organization for central Alabama's LGBTQ+ community, has dissolved.

ALASKA Fairbanks: The University of Alaska Board of Regents voted to eliminate out-of-state tuition surcharges beginning in fall 2027, a move aimed at boosting enrollment, simplifying tuition policies and attracting more students from outside Alaska, KTUU reported.

ARIZONA Phoenix: After a decade of planning, Steele Indian School Park broke ground on a new monument honoring a Cold War-era submarine while paying tribute to the service members and shipyard workers who supported its mission.

ARKANSAS Rogers: Arts-and-crafts store chain Michaels will open its first Northwest Arkansas store in Rogers on Aug. 14, featuring an experimental community-focused format with expanded services, KARK reported.

CALIFORNIA Sacramento: According to a new WalletHub study, California's health care system ranks No. 24 in the nation overall. The state fares far worse for affordability, however, ranking No. 39. On a more positive note, California ranks No. 14 for health outcomes.

COLORADO Grand County: Colorado Parks and Wildlife killed a second wolf in less than two months for repeated depredations of livestock, with the latest lethal removal coming after the deadliest month of attacks.

CONNECTICUT Hartford: Connecticut's minimum wage will increase to $17.48 per hour on Jan. 1, 2027, rising $0.54 from the $16.94 hourly rate under a state law that ties wage growth to economic conditions.

DELAWARE Dover: A state task force says not to expect small-scale nuclear power generation in Delaware, for now. The bipartisan Delaware Nuclear Energy Feasibility Task Force's report determined that generation is not a viable short-term solution for the state, with years of road ahead.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: A federal appeals court ordered President Donald Trump's administration Aug. 7 to stop construction on a $400 million ballroom on the site of the White House's demolished East Wing.

GEORGIA Augusta: The Grow Back Project, a University of Georgia-led reforestation effort launched after Hurricane Helene devastated the region's tree canopy, is developing an interactive website to help Augusta-area homeowners select the right trees for their properties.

HAWAII Honolulu: Progressives' hot streak hit a snag in Hawaii when Rep. Ed Case, one of the Democratic Party's most moderate House members, scored a primary victory over a more left-leaning challenger in a district that includes Honolulu. Case cruised to a win over state Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole by over 20 percentage points in the state's 1st District.

IDAHO Nampa: Idaho officials reported the detection of a single invasive Aedes aegypti mosquito in Nampa, marking only the second known sighting of the virus-carrying species in the state, KTVB7 reported.

ILLINOIS Rockford: Rockford Promise Scholars will have a new route to a bachelor's degree under an agreement linking Rockford Promise, Rock Valley College and Rockford University. The three organizations signed a memorandum of understanding that expands scholarship support for transfer students, according to a community announcement.

INDIANA South Bend: A new movie theater might be making its way into the historic State Theatre thanks to a $4 million award of READI 2.0 Arts and Culture grants from the state.

IOWA Des Moines: A new audit shows inspection rates for Iowa nursing homes have drastically improved over the last two years, State Auditor Rob Sand says. According to the new audit, Iowa now conducts certified nursing home inspections every 12 months on average compared with the 2024 average of 17.1 months.

KANSAS Topeka: For the first time, the Kansas state government has commemorated Purple Heart Day. In an Aug. 7 ceremony at the Statehouse, Gov. Laura Kelly issued a proclamation with several Purple Heart recipients in attendance.

HIGHLIGHT: FLORIDA

Loggerhead sea turtle nests are marked on Sanibel Island in Lee County on July 21. ANDREW WEST/USA TODAY NETWORK

Sanibel: It's been a mixed bag for sea turtles nesting in southwest Florida this summer. Many beaches in the area are seeing record numbers of nests – but, at a time when researchers are concerned about hatch rates, some of the nests have been lost to the sea and others to predators. Sea turtles flock to Florida shorelines during the summer and early fall to breed, feed, dig nests and deposit the next generation onto beaches. Kelly Sloan, sea turtle coordinator of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, said beaches on Sanibel Island are having a record year for overall nest numbers. Sanibel is the largest island city in southwest Florida. The sea turtle monitoring program there started in 1950 and is the oldest in the nation.

KENTUCKY Louisville: Parents of Jefferson County Public Schools students will have a new app to track the location of their child's bus this school year. JCPS has launched My Ride K-12 to replace the Edulog app that families have used the past few years.

LOUISIANA Baton Rouge: Five people have died in Louisiana from flesh-eating bacteria infections so far in 2026, health officials said. A total of nine cases of Vibrio vulnificus bacteria have been reported in 2026 in the state, the Louisiana Department of Health reported.

MAINE Hallowell: The Maine Public Utilities Commission has launched a statewide Text-to-911 awareness campaign ahead of the school year, allowing residents to discreetly contact emergency services by text when calling is unsafe or impractical, News Center Maine reported.

MARYLAND Salisbury: A brand-new Amazon distribution center is headed to the city of Salisbury and is set to open soon. The new site will operate as what Amazon calls a "delivery station."

MASSACHUSETTS Boston: Federal immigration officers are now banned from making civil arrests in Massachusetts schools, hospitals and courthouses, along with a variety of other measures, under a new law giving the state what lawmakers say are some of the strongest immigration protections in the country.

MICHIGAN Mackinac County: The Department of Natural Resources is asking the public what it thinks about opening Bois Blanc Island to bear hunting. The island, which is open to hunting other game animals, has been closed to bear hunting for decades.

MINNESOTA Appleton: Immigration and Customs Enforcement will pay private prison company CoreCivic more than half a billion dollars to reopen a defunct 1,600-bed prison in rural western Minnesota, known as the Prairie Correctional Facility, as an immigrant detention center, Minnesota Reformer reported.

MISSISSIPPI Columbus: Packaging solutions provider DRC Industries plans to invest $4 million and create 50 jobs in Lowndes County as it establishes operations in Columbus, marking the latest manufacturing-related project supported by the Mississippi Development Authority in the Golden Triangle region.

MISSOURI Columbia: A new elementary school in southwest Columbia will welcome its first students for the 2026-27 school year. Columbia Public Schools officials celebrated the opening of Eagle Bluffs Elementary School, home of the Griffons, with a ribbon-cutting Aug. 3 ahead of the first day of school on Aug. 25.

MONTANA Helena: Twenty-two Montana Democratic lawmakers are urging Alani Bankhead, the Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate race, to withdraw from the race and back independent candidate Seth Bodnar, arguing a three-way contest would improve Republican candidate Kurt Alme's chances of winning, The Daily Montanan reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: Lincoln Children's Zoo announced Bella, a nearly 16-year-old cheetah and founding member of its Cheetah Chase program, has died after age-related health issues led staff to humanely euthanize her, KOLN reported.

NEVADA Reno: A large south Reno industrial park that houses Amazon's newest same-day facility just completed another building. The 580 South project finished major construction of its second facility.

NEW HAMPSHIRE North Hampton: The second segment of the New Hampshire Seacoast Greenway, the local section of the approximately 3,000-mile East Coast rail trail, is ready for public use.

NEW JERSEY Newark: The New Jersey Attorney General's Office has launched an investigation into potential civil rights violations by GEO Group, the private operator of Delaney Hall, in response to reports of poor conditions and deaths at the immigration detention center.

NEW MEXICO Lincoln: A medical transport plane crash that killed four people this spring has been linked to a U.S. military GPS jamming exercise, a preliminary report released by the National Transportation Safety Board shows.

NEW YORK Albany: New York's homeless population has grown in communities outside New York City despite a statewide decline, a new report from the New York State Comptroller's Office reveals. In the latest numbers from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Point-in-Time Count, the Empire State saw a nearly 8% decrease in its homeless population between 2024 and 2025.

NORTH CAROLINA Raleigh: Miss North Carolina USA for 2026 has been stripped of her title after a reported conduct issue. The Miss USA Organization announced that less than two months after receiving the Miss North Carolina USA crown, Brittany Boltinhouse would no longer hold the title as of Aug. 5.

NORTH DAKOTA Bismarck: Gov. Kelly Armstrong has declared a statewide fire emergency as drought conditions now affect more than half the state and heighten wildfire risks, KMOT reported.

OHIO Ravenna: A new, $5 million water tower in Ravenna will give the city's residents better access to water in the event of an emergency. City officials said the new elevated water storage tank, which replaces the former GE Standpipe, will hold less water than the old tank, but its design will lead to better water pressure and better water quality.

OKLAHOMA Pauls Valley: Just a few months after celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Toy & Action Figure Museum is closing its doors at the end of August.

OREGON Eugene: A coalition of local nonprofits will soon open a new "third space" for youth in downtown Eugene. Connected Lane County, Ophelia's Place and A Family for Every Child have banded together to form Youth HUB, a drop-in resource referral mecca, basic needs provider and community center all wrapped in one.

PENNSYLVANIA Lancaster: The Raven Ridge Wildlife Center announced the center successfully rehabilitated and released the adult female bobcat that had been brought to the center after it was struck by a car in Adams County on Feb. 14.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: Near-record rainfall in July has helped replenish groundwater supplies in Rhode Island, but state officials expect a drought watch to remain in effect into at least September. While precipitation totals in July exceeded historical averages by a wide margin and heavy rains have continued in the first few days of August, groundwater levels still aren't back to where they should be, said Meredith Brady, chair of the Water Resources Board's Drought Steering Committee.

SOUTH CAROLINA Greer: The city of Greer and Prisma Health announced a 10-year, $3 million naming rights partnership for the city's new sports and events center, according to a city of Greer news release. The 200,000-square-foot facility, currently under construction, will be called the Prisma Health Performance Center.

SOUTH DAKOTA Aberdeen: The city is finding new ways to enhance everyday living. Aberdeen previously set aside $200,000 to convert Main Street back to two-way traffic. When that project was ultimately shelved, Mayor Travis Schaunaman and city council members chose instead to redirect those funds into a citywide manhole improvement program.

TENNESSEE Memphis: After three long years, Memphis is officially no longer the city with the worst drivers in America. ConsumerAffairs, a customer review and news service that collects and analyzes data to assess various aspects of American life, annually releases its rankings of the worst cities for drivers. Memphis was ranked as the second-worst city for drivers, a break from the city's three-year stint at No. 1.

TEXAS El Paso: The University of Texas at El Paso is getting a boost to its workforce development programs. U.S. Sen. John Cornyn recently announced a $2 million grant aimed at bolstering the university's artificial intelligence and cybersecurity workforce development programs to ensure professionals are equipped to protect critical infrastructure.

UTAH Salt Lake City: The University of Utah has acquired the final 50 acres of historic Fort Douglas from the U.S. Army Reserve, completing a decadeslong land transfer process and opening the site for future housing, recreation and campus development while preserving its historic character, KSL reported.

VERMONT Essex Junction: Workforce in Motion will bring students and employers together at the Champlain Valley Expo on Sept. 29 for a career summit designed to address Vermont's workforce challenges and connect young people with local job opportunities.

VIRGINIA Richmond: Gov. Abigail Spanberger announced the launch of an Intensive Reentry Program at Red Onion State Prison, aimed at helping inmates successfully transition back into their communities and the workforce, WRIC reported.

WASHINGTON Spokane: A man accused of starting a major wildfire that continued to burn in northeast Washington on Aug. 6 told investigators he had planned the fire for weeks before setting it earlier in August, according to court documents.

WEST VIRGINIA Mason County: Nucor said construction and commissioning of its $4 billion sheet steel mill in Mason County remain on schedule and within budget, with the facility still expected to begin production in 2027, WV News reported.

WISCONSIN Madison: A conservative law firm is seeking to block Gov. Tony Evers from taking any further steps toward bringing legal online sports betting to Wisconsin with a new lawsuit. The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty filed the challenge against Evers and members of his administration asking a judge to declare the contentious law, enacted in April, unconstitutional.

WYOMING Cheyenne: Angi Bruce resigned as head of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department effective immediately to take a new position in Gov. Mark Gordon's office, WyoFile reported.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

ASK JOHNNY

How to improve employee retention

Johnny C. Taylor Jr.
Columnist
USA TODAY

Johnny C. Taylor Jr. tackles your workplace questions each week for USA TODAY. Taylor is president and CEO of SHRM, the world's largest trade association of human resources professionals, and author of "Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval."

Question: We had a well-liked manager who took a position at another company last fall. We were sad to see the manager go, and unfortunately, in the time since, we have lost a number of additional employees who have essentially been poached by this other company. These are all employees who were equally well-liked, and I believe fit very well in our company culture and enjoyed their time here. What can we do to improve our employee retention? – Taylor

Answer: Losing a respected manager is difficult. Losing talented employees soon afterward can be even more concerning. But before you conclude another company is poaching your people, ask yourself a question: Why are they choosing to leave?

Not every departure represents a failure. Sometimes another opportunity is simply a better fit for an employee's goals, career aspirations, or stage of life. The key is identifying patterns. Healthy turnover is inevitable. Repeated turnover for the same reasons deserves your attention.

Leadership transitions are one of the clearest tests of an organization's strength. They reveal whether you've invested in developing leaders at every level and are prepared for inevitable change. Strong managers earn trust, so it's not surprising when employees choose to follow a leader they respect. But no organization should depend on one exceptional leader to sustain engagement or retention. Every organization should prepare for the day a great leader moves on. That's not pessimism. That's good succession planning.

Instead of reacting emotionally, get curious. Exit interviews tell you why people left. Stay interviews help you understand why your best employees remain and what might cause them to leave. Both are valuable. Look for patterns instead of isolated stories. Are employees leaving because they don't see opportunities to grow? Do they feel supported by their managers? Are compensation, flexibility, or career development emerging as common themes? Understand the problem before rushing to fix it.

Retention isn't built when employees receive another offer. It's built every day, long before they do. Employees are more likely to stay when they trust their leaders, receive regular feedback, feel recognized for their contributions, and see opportunities to grow. That kind of commitment is built through everyday conversations, meaningful coaching, and consistent investment in people's development, not during an exit interview or a last-minute counteroffer.

You can't prevent every talented employee from accepting another opportunity, nor should you try to. High performers will always attract attention from competitors. What you can do is create an environment where talented people choose to stay because they believe they're growing, they're valued, and they have a future.

Measure your organization's success by the compelling reasons employees have to stay, not by whether one exceptional leader keeps them engaged. Organizations that consistently invest in their people, develop leaders at every level, and prepare for change don't just retain more talent. They build stronger cultures, stronger leadership pipelines, and stronger businesses.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of USA TODAY.

19 charged in $4M Pennsylvania home health care fraud cases

Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY

Nineteen people have been charged in connection with schemes that fraudulently billed Pennsylvania's Medicaid program more than $4 million for home health care services, federal and state authorities announced.

The defendants, including home care company owners, home health aides and Medicaid recipients, were charged with health care fraud and other related offenses, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania said Aug. 4. Prosecutors said the schemes involved false billing records, overlapping shifts, paying kickbacks to clients, and fraudulent clock-in and clock-out entries to collect Medicaid payments.

Some home health aides sought reimbursement for care they purportedly provided while they were in jail, hospitalized, out of the country, working other jobs or otherwise unavailable to assist patients, the Justice Department said. Federal authorities also described recurring patterns of "impossible work hours," including one case in which a home health aide claimed to provide care for more than 24 hours in a day on more than 1,100 occasions. Prosecutors said the aide billed for more than 64,000 hours "that could not have been worked," resulting in more than $1.2 million in Medicaid payments.

"The great fraud against the American taxpayer takes many forms," U.S. Attorney David Metcalf said in a statement. "It is outrageous and unacceptable that anyone could steal money by billing nonexistent home care services for caregivers who were, in fact, dead, in prison, or trafficking drugs."

Health aides accused of billing Medicaid while in jail, hospitalized

Prosecutors charged several Philadelphia-area home health aides and Medicaid recipients.

One indictment charges Joseph Pizzo, 47, and Tiziana Taormina, 52, with conspiracy and health care fraud. Prosecutors say Taormina submitted claims for home care services while Pizzo was incarcerated and while he was working in construction, leading to at least $160,000 in Medicaid payouts.

A separate indictment accused Donna Romsteadt, 63, Alyssa Cuculino, 27, Louise Israel, 46, and Elexis Cuculino, 51, of similar health care fraud offenses. According to prosecutors, Alyssa Cuculino and Israel were aides and Romsteadt and Elexis Cuculino were Medicaid recipients.

Alyssa Cuculino billed for home care services during periods when she was working another job or hospitalized, while Israel submitted claims while in jail, according to the indictment. Prosecutors said the scheme resulted in about $445,000 in fraudulent payments.

Authorities also charged Albert Coccia Jr., 56, and his son, Santino Coccia, 28, accusing Santino Coccia of billing Medicaid for services he claimed to provide to his father while working as a ride-share and food delivery driver. Prosecutors said the fraud generated more than $211,000 in claims.

Prosecutors allege overseas travel, deceased employees

In another case, prosecutors said Sean Murray, 58, billed Medicaid about $400,000 for home care services that were not provided while he was at a gym, traveling, visiting a massage parlor or selling drugs. Authorities accused him of paying kickbacks to clients to facilitate the scheme.

Prosecutors also charged Charles Bowie, 53, saying he billed Medicaid while traveling internationally, including trips to Saudi Arabia, Jamaica and Colombia. Authorities said the scheme involved about $600,000 in Medicaid billings, most of which were fraudulent.

Another indictment accuses Benevolent Home Health LLC and its owners, Khaleelah Williams, 49, and Saleemah Davis, 29, of health care fraud conspiracy and wire fraud. The company's owners allegedly obtained about $224,000 in Medicaid payments through the scheme. Prosecutors accused the Philadelphia-based home health care company of billing Medicaid for services performed by Williams' husband while he was selling drugs and after he was arrested on drug trafficking charges. Davis and Williams also are accused of billing Medicaid for services allegedly provided by a home health aide who had died.

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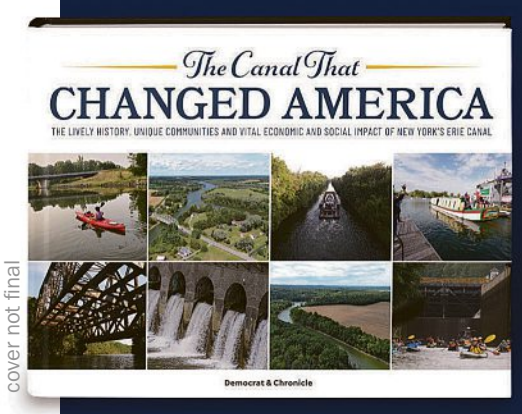
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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

The expectations are high for Steve Sarkisian and Texas this season as the Longhorns begin the season ranked fourth in the US LBM Coaches Poll. NATHAN RAY SEEBECK/IMAGN IMAGES

The 6-year itch

Steve Sarkisian goes on the clock among football coaches seeking a national title

Blake Toppmeyer
Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Hugh Freeze's eyes got big a few years ago when someone pointed out Kirby Smart took Georgia to the national championship game in his second season.

Freeze had been busy trying to downplay expectations early in his Auburn tenure, and he literally could not believe the reality of Smart's success timeline.

"His second (year)? Phew," Freeze said back then. "I don't know that that's accurate, but, um, anyway ..."

Wikipedia exists to remind us Smart did indeed take Georgia to the national title game in his second season, which infamously ended on 2nd-and-26 with the Bulldogs losing to Alabama in overtime.

Smart's bio also reminds us he didn't win his first national championship until his sixth season.

That's also true of Ryan Day.

Day endured a what-could-have-been finish in 2022, when Noah Ruggles' field-goal attempt sailed wide left as the clock struck midnight of a College Football Playoff semifinal game against Georgia.

If that kick splits the uprights, Day's Buckeyes would've beaten TCU in the national championship game that season. Instead, Day had to wait until the 2024 season to taste glory.

Like Smart, Day's championship breakthrough came in Year 6.

Consider it college football's curious power of six.

Sure, Curt Cignetti raced along the fast lane to success – one wonders how big Freeze's eyes got when Indiana won a national championship – but a little patience proved necessary for each of college football's other active championship coaches.

I bring that up because inside the nation's most pressure-packed conference, the SEC, four coaches are entering their sixth season at their current job.

Let's take a status check of how close each

See TOPPMEYER, Page 2C

Rallying Brennan wins bid to Playoff

Ryne Dennis
Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

GREENSBORO, NC – Michael Brennan was far outside the FedExCup Playoffs and needed a career week at the Wyndham Championship to have any chance of getting inside the top 70.

He took control Aug. 9 on the front nine with five straight birdies to pull away from the field, notch his second career PGA Tour victory and jump 58 spots to 47th as the Playoffs begin.

Brennan finished Sunday 22 under after a 6-under 64 to top Beau Hossler by three strokes in the PGA Tour's regular-season finale.

Hossler led or co-led after all three rounds at the Wyndham, but the win he needed to make the Playoffs came up just short as he finished 72nd in the regular-season standings.

"I think really positive week for me. Stings a little bit," Hossler said. "With that being said, very proud of my

See PLAYOFF, Page 2C

Michael Brennan celebrates after winning the Wyndham Championship on Aug. 9 at Sedgefield Country Club. CALEB BOWLIN/GETTY IMAGES

Nancy Armour
Columnist
USA TODAY

Hezly Rivera's comeback will pay off for new-look USA

PHOENIX – This might have been the best-case scenario for Hezly Rivera.

The competition at the world gymnastics championships in October is going to be fierce. The Russians are back with a full team, and these worlds are the first chance countries have to secure their spots at LA28.

That's new territory for Rivera. Sure, she has an Olympic gold medal. But this will be the first time the U.S. women will be counting on her, rather than Simone Biles or Suni Lee, to lead the charge. By having to dig herself out of a hole to win her second U.S. title on Aug. 9, Rivera showed she has the grit to thrive.

Trailing by sixth-tenths of a point after the first day of competition, Rivera wound up winning by 1.15 points. She also won the title on balance beam and was second overall on floor exercise.

"I think it just shows how strong I am mentally. Because physically, everything's there. But the mental aspect of things is definitely where it's at. You can't really do this without having a strong mentality," Rivera said.

Youngest on U.S. Olympic team

Rivera, now 18, was a surprise

See ARMOUR, Page 2C

Bieniemy returns to Chiefs camp as wife recovers

Chris Bumbaca
USA TODAY

Kansas City Chiefs offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy has returned to practice Aug. 10 following a two-week absence as his wife, Mia Bieniemy, recovered from multiple gunshot wounds during an incident at the family's home in Ashburn, Virginia.

Eric Bieniemy's son, Elijah Bieniemy, was charged with three felonies in connection to the incident July 26, including malicious wounding and discharge of a firearm inside a dwelling. Mia Bieniemy was taken to a hospital to recover and Eric Bieniemy immediately left the Chiefs to be beside her.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid said Mia Bieniemy was in stable condition July 29.

According to The Athletic, Eric Bieniemy told fans as he walked to practice Monday "it's great to be back."

Bieniemy has not been distant from training camp, however. Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes told reporters Aug. 8 that Bieniemy has been in contact with the team while away and also was glad to hear that Mia Bieniemy was on the mend.

"She's doing better now," said Mahomes, who is trying to fully recover from a torn ACL in December in time for Week 1. "So, it's always great to hear the news from him about her and it's been good to talk to him."

Bieniemy has been meeting with the team via Zoom and live streaming practices, per Mahomes.

"I mean, he's still 'EB.' It's not like he's not 'EB.' And so he's calling you at the end of the night and talking to you about kind of throughout the day and all the plays and stuff like that," Mahomes said.

Known for bellowing throughout an entire practice, Bieniemy's presence will be welcomed by the players, Mahomes said.

"We'll be excited to get him back, but at the same time, we want him to take as much time as he needs to be with his family," Mahomes said. "But when he does come back, he'll be the most excited guy on the football field."

Eric Bieniemy had been away from the Chiefs' camp while his wife began her recovery. MARK J. REBILAS/IMAGN IMAGES

Toppmeyer

Continued from Page 1C

appears to a national championship.

Steve Sarkisian (Texas): Could be on the brink of a title. Sark's Longhorns underachieved last season and became the first preseason No. 1 team in the US LBM Coaches Poll to finish the season ranked outside of the top 10 since 2012 LSU. That hiccup does not change that Sarkisian's tenure remains on schedule for him to experience the Year 6 success that came to Smart and Day. Sark is in possession of one of the most talented rosters in the country.

Josh Heupel (Tennessee): Doing fine, but not on the verge of a title. Heupel reaching Year 6 is notable because none of his Tennessee predecessors since Phillip Fulmer reached a sixth season. Heupel is a force of consistency, serving nothing but winning seasons, and his offenses routinely rank among the nation's best. The Volunteers seem positioned for a Top 25 season, but a national championship is not imminent. Heupel will break in a young quarterback, no matter whether Faizon Brandon or George MacIntyre wins the job. And although Tennessee made a strong hire of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, his defenses tend to shoot up during his second season on a staff, not the first.

Kirby Smart coached Georgia to a national title in his sixth season with the Bulldogs, while Steve Sarkisian seeks his first College Football Playoff championship in his sixth season with Texas. TODD KIRKLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Shane Beamer (South Carolina): On the hot seat. Beamer is much closer to a firing than a national title – or an SEC title, for that matter. He delivered some good times, but his fifth season became the low point. Beamer noted at SEC media days a lot of familiar faces return this season. Is that cause for excitement or trepidation? This group of guys served a 4-8 record and just one SEC win in 2025. At least Beamer made it this far. Only five Gamecocks coaches lasted longer than six seasons.

Clark Lea (Vanderbilt): Settled in, trending in right direction. Last season taught us a Playoff bid doesn't have to be a pipe dream at Vanderbilt. Thanks to Diego Pavia, the Commodores were in contention, right up to selection day. Their 10 wins set a program record. Can Lea do it again? Not this year, but the presence of five-star freshman quarterback Jared Curtis shows they're done being a doormat. Vanderbilt's patience in Lea has been rewarded, even if that reward never rises to the level of a national title.

In the Big Ten's on-deck circle

Now, I present two coaches to consider outside of the SEC: Oregon's Dan Lanning and Southern Cal's Lincoln Riley.

They are each entering Year 5, and they talk as if they believe they built national championship contenders.

"It's time," Riley told ESPN and CBS earlier this offseason. "The program's ready (to contend)."

That's even more believable at Oregon, where Lanning's Ducks reached the semifinals last year, before the Hoosiers steamrolled them.

"We're close," Lanning said to ESPN at Big Ten Media Days.

Close enough to cut in line and achieve in Year 5 what it took Smart and Day six seasons to do?

That would be an eye-opening achievement.

Blake Toppmeyer is the USA TODAY Network's senior national college football columnist. Email at BToppmeyer@gannett.com and follow him on X at @btoppmeyer

Playoff

Continued from Page 1C

commitment today and was resilient top to bottom."

Brennan and Hossler began the day tied at 16 under, but birdies on Nos. 4 through 8 gave Brennan the lead for good after Hossler took a brief lead with an eagle on the par-5 fifth. Hossler had two bogeys over the next 10 holes before birdies at 16 and 17. It was too late of a move as he finished with a 3-under 67.

Brennan's five-birdie run put the tournament out of reach, as he never held less than a two-shot lead the remainder of the tournament. His focus never lapsed despite taking control of the tournament.

"I've lost tournaments with bigger leads in shorter amount of holes remaining before," Brennan said. "So I'm trying to just remind myself when I'm out there like, hey, there's a lot of golf left to be played."

Brennan solidified the victory with a birdie on the 18th to secure his first win since last year's Bank of Utah Championship. This one is bigger though because it earned him a spot in the Masters next April.

Brennan's mom, Shannon, greeted him on the 18th green to remind him that the win meant a free ticket to Augusta next spring.

"I was so excited about the Masters because I had been thinking about the FedExCup Playoffs the whole week, like I knew that was coming," he said. "I swear, I didn't even think about the Masters until my mom told me behind 18 green. It was more probably shock value of remembering that a win gets you in."

Ben James shot a final-round low 61 to finish third at 18-under while Kevin Yu finished fourth at 16-under. Harry Hall and Tom Kim tied for fifth at 15-under.

Sedgefield Country Club is 25 miles down the road from Wake Forest, where Brennan won eight times during his collegiate career. He adds to a list of Wake Forest winners in the event, including Cameron Young (2025), Webb Simpson (2011), Scott Hoch (2001) and Lanny Wadkins (1983).

Brennan visited the campus Aug. 3, to reflect on his college career.

"Yeah, it's awesome to be here in the Winston-Salem area," he said. "Lived here for four years and loved my time at Wake Forest. I just walked around for a while; it was good to be back."

On the bubble

Rookie Jackson Koivun finished the regular season 70th for the final position in the FedExCup Playoffs. Koivun rode the bubble during his 1-over par 71 final round to finish 8-under and tied for 29th. He dropped to 71st after a bogey on the first, but after getting back to even par by the sixth hole, he remained inside the bubble.

"There's definitely some added pressure today, felt it coming down the stretch," Koivun said. "Just tried to stay committed and make good swings. Obviously I wanted to make the Playoffs and I knew that was a farfetched goal. If I told myself back in June that I would be sitting at 70 and waiting it out in Greensboro, I think I'd be pretty happy."

In just six events this season, he tied Tiger Woods for the fewest needed to make the Playoffs. Woods made the 2008 field, placing 70th in the regular season when 125 players qualified.

The former Auburn standout has three top-25 finishes and a win at the 3M Open two weeks ago.

Matti Schmid dropped two spots but made the Playoffs in 69th while Ricky Castillo finished T-49 Sunday to place 68th.

Missing the FedExCup Playoffs

On the opposite side of the bubble, Steven Fisk finished 71st (after starting the week 69th), Matt Wallace 72nd and Keegan Bradley 73rd, breaking the Ryder Cup captain's 15-year Playoff streak.

Other notables to miss include Jason Day (81st), whose 18-year showing came to an end after missing the Wyndham Championship cut, Brooks Koepka (95th) and Tony Finau (99th).

What's the Playoffs' first round?

The top 70 play next weekend in the FedEx St. Jude Championship before the field is cut to 50 for the BMW Championship in St. Louis. It will be cut down to the final 30 for the Tour Championship at East Lake in Atlanta.

Scottie Scheffler leads the standings, followed by Matthew Fitzpatrick, Cameron Young, Wyndham Clarke and Chris Gotterup.

Armour

Continued from Page 1C

member of the Paris team, taking advantage of the opening created by injuries to two-time world all-around medalist Shilese Jones and Skye Blakely at Olympic trials.

Because Rivera had never even been to a world championships before, and because Biles, Lee, Jade Carey and Jordan Chiles were all returning Olympians, little was asked of the youngest member of Team USA. Rivera wound up competing in only two events in Paris, both during qualifying.

With her Paris teammates all taking last year off, Jones still out and Blakely taking her return slowly, the spotlight naturally shifted to Rivera. She embraced it, winning her first U.S. title in dominant fashion. That would have made Rivera a favorite for an all-around medal, if not the title, at the 2025 world championships. But she missed that event because of an ankle injury, which means this year's worlds will be Rivera's first experience at the center of the pressure cooker. She cannot afford to get rattled or flustered or to fall apart because, as she goes, so will the whole U.S. team.

With a spot at the Los Angeles Olympics on the line.

"Hezly did a fantastic job tonight rebounding from night one, and just proving to herself and everybody else that that was just a little fluke and she's capable of so much," Carey said. "And back-to-back national champion is something that she should be really proud of."

Uneven bars fall puts her in hole

A fall off uneven bars on the first night of competition dropped Rivera down to fourth, with significant ground to make up on Claire Pease and Blakely. While Blakely had significant errors on both floor exercise and balance beam on the second day, Pease did not.

If Rivera wanted a second title, she was going to have to earn it.

"I knew it was close because obviously day one and stuff, but I was not paying attention at all. I kind of just started looking down. I looked at my scores and then I just looked down everywhere, just trying to keep my head in the game and focused," Rivera said.

All-around champion Hezly Rivera rallied to win the overall title at the Xfinity U.S. Gymnastics Championships on Aug. 9 at Mortgage Matchup Center in Phoenix. CHRIS CODUTO/GETTY IMAGES

She started with a decent routine on uneven bars. It wasn't her best, it wasn't her worst, and she and coach Valeri Liukin exchanged a look when she finished as if to say, "Ehh. It was fine."

From then on Rivera was on fire.

Title earned, not just won

She was rock solid on balance beam, with only a small wobble after her sheep jump. She landed her dismount so low she was still folded in half when she hit the mat, but her 14.4 was the highest score of nationals on the event and cut Pease's margin to a half-point.

Rivera's floor routine was dazzling. She got great height on her tumbling passes, and she stuck her landings as if she was landing in super glue. Her 14.3 was the second-highest score of the day on the event and, after an out-of-bounds and other shaky landings by Pease, was enough to put Rivera in the lead.

She capped her night with a solid vault. Despite a long hold before she was cleared to go, Rivera soared high above the table and landed solidly, taking only a slight hop. The title, and the added confidence it will bring, were hers.

"It's a great thing for her," said Anna Liukin, Rivera's other coach. "She is a lot more mature and a lot more confident right now."

Good thing. Because the Americans will be counting on her.

MLB POWER RANKINGS

Brewers replace Dodgers/Skubal at 1

Gabe Lacques
USA TODAY

Perhaps some time in October, the Milwaukee Brewers will regret not trading for Tarik Skubal. For the moment, they are the best team in the major leagues and have one would-be Skubal pawn to partially thank for it.

The Brewers ascended to No. 1 in USA TODAY Sports' MLB power rankings thanks to two one-run victories over the Minnesota Twins in a taut battle of Upper Midwest playoff contenders. Their series-clinching victory came in 10 innings on a Jake Bauers walk-off single, but it was a catch by right fielder Luis Lara in the top of the inning – his second fantastic grab of the day – that prevented a huge inning and put Milwaukee in position to win.

Lara, 21, was among the players the Brewers roped off from Skubal talks, having signed him to a team-friendly extension and identifying him as a key part of their future. Ranked by Baseball America as the game's No. 35 prospect, he boosted Milwaukee on a day Jacob Misiorowski made history but couldn't close the deal.

No matter. Milwaukee's 74-44 record gives it a three-game edge over Atlanta for best in the National League as the Brewers maintained a 5½-game lead over the relentless Chicago Cubs.

Right fielder Luis Lara saved two extra-base hits with outstanding catches against the Twins, as the Brewers maintained the best record in the major leagues. MICHAEL MCLOONE/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

A look at our updated MLB rankings (records and statistics going into games Aug. 10):

1. Milwaukee Brewers (+1): Four games at Dodger Stadium may evoke bad memories of last October – or a boost toward the next one.

2. Los Angeles Dodgers (-1): 9-15 over last 24 games. Still no reason for concern?

3. Tampa Bay Rays (+1): Now 25 games over .500, but Griffin Jax's elbow discomfort a pop-up concern.

4. Atlanta Braves (-1): Nearly swept in Yankee Stadium.

5. Chicago Cubs (+1): Craig Counsell slots Pete Crow-Armstrong in at DH for two games, the better to save his legs for the stretch.

6. New York Yankees (-1): Cody Bellinger performing baseball activities, Aaron Judge receives semi-positive news. Sky, not yet falling.

7. Boston Red Sox (–): Lose consecutive games for first time since June 30-July 1 – against the Athletics, no less.

8. Arizona Diamondbacks (+1): Starters held Dodgers to three earned runs in 19 ⅔ innings of series victory.

9. Chicago White Sox (-1): Hagen Smith, the fifth overall pick in 2024, pitches two scoreless relief innings in his major league debut.

10. Philadelphia Phillies (–): Jesus Luzardo with a 2.25 ERA over his last 100 innings pitched.

11. San Diego Padres (–): An odd setback for Nick Pivetta on rehab start road.

12. Miami Marlins (+1): No one wants to play them at loanDepot Park. Really – they're an NL-best 36-24 at home.

13. Houston Astros (+1): Yordan Alvarez leads all Triple Crown categories and only Junior Caminero (33 homers to Alvarez's 35) can likely prevent it.

14. Cleveland Guardians (-2): Lost five of six after nifty trade deadline additions.

15. Texas Rangers (+2): Jordan Montgomery, their 2023 World Series hero, appears in a major league game for first time since 2024.

16. Minnesota Twins (-1): Kaelan Culpepper arrives, homers in second career at-bat.

17. St. Louis Cardinals (+2): Jettison Dustin May, JoJo Romero and Lars Nootbaar at deadline, then win series against Yankees, Rockies.

18. Pittsburgh Pirates (-2): Have not won a series since July 19.

19. Washington Nationals (-1): Andrés Chaparro starting to excel in pinch-hitting/platoon role.

20. Baltimore Orioles (+1): Begin a Rangers-Twins-Rays-Yankees-Rays gauntlet by losing two in Texas.

21. Detroit Tigers (+1): Jackson Jobe completes Tommy John surgery comeback with five scoreless innings.

22. Cincinnati Reds (+1): Ace Chase Burns' 12-game winning streak finally ends.

23. Seattle Mariners (-3): This incredibly disappointing year should probably produce consequences.

24. Toronto Blue Jays (–): Daulton Varsho trade gives Brett Bateman a shot to turn heads in center field.

25. New York Mets (+1): Their season long since ruined, they're now spoiling it for others (Guardians, Pirates).

26. San Francisco Giants (-1): Matt Chapman out for rest of year after sports hernia surgery.

27. Kansas City Royals (–): Luinder Avila and Stephen Kolek both succumb to Tommy John surgery.

28. Athletics (–): General manager David Forst learns a lesson as old as time: Few get out of Yolo County alive.

29. Colorado Rockies (–): Zac Veen with a three-homer, 5-for-5 eruption at Class AAA.

30. Los Angeles Angels (–): Trade-deadline prize shortstop Arjun Nimmala starts with Class AA Trash Pandas.

FLAG FOOTBALL

Maci Joncich chasing an Olympic dream

Ansley Gavlak
USA TODAY

When 6-year-old Maci Joncich first stepped onto a football field full of boys, she was just trying to compete with her two older brothers.

At the time, flag football was simply a recreational game. It wasn't played in high schools across the country, it hadn't reached college campuses and it certainly wasn't an Olympic sport.

Two decades later, as flag football prepares for its debut at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, Joncich is pursuing a dream that didn't even exist when she entered the sport. Unlike most aspiring Olympians, she has no pathway to follow, no blueprint to look at and no Olympian to imitate.

"Growing up, I never really had a flag football idol," Joncich said. "Not that there weren't amazing women out there playing the sport, but it wasn't marketed. It wasn't known."

Joncich took a chance on flag football long before the world acknowledged it.

She began playing on a travel team out of Las Vegas when she was 14. Three years later, she became the youngest player selected to the U.S. national team in 2024, just months after she graduated from Coronado High School.

But as flag football has grown throughout the last 20 years, Joncich has grown right alongside it – helping define a path for the generation behind her as she pursues her Olympic dream.

"It changed my mindset with everything that I do," Joncich said. "If I wake up in the morning and I don't want to work out, there's a little thing in the back of my brain that's saying, 'You're going to be on the Olympic team. Go work out.' "

Joncich's story mirrors those of many young girls trying to navigate these new opportunities. A sport that was once overlooked is now accessible in all 50 states.

Flag football has seen a 50% increase in participation since 2020, with more than 4.1 million youth participants recorded last year.

Josh Saunders, the head coach of 11-time Florida state champion Robinson High School, has witnessed that growth firsthand.

Saunders got his start on the sidelines in 2006, just three years after Florida became the first state to sanction girls flag football as a varsity sport. Since then, he has also coached the University of Florida club team and the U17 junior national team, giving him a front-row seat to the sport's growth across multiple levels.

Maci Joncich (7) was selected to the U.S. women's flag football national team for the third consecutive year. USA FOOTBALL

"I stopped trying to imagine what could be next because I would have been wrong about what the sport was capable of," Saunders said. "It's one of those things that you just kind of let it do its thing."

Since the start of Saunders' coaching career, 23 states have officially sanctioned the sport – and that number is only expected to grow.

"If you're not [playing], then you're getting left out," Saunders said. "You're almost doing high school kids a disservice. You're not taking away opportunities, but you're certainly not providing opportunities for kids to have."

That growth of the sport at the high school level has sparked opportunities on college campuses.

The National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) announced its partnership with NFL Flag in May to create a new club league at colleges across the country.

"I haven't seen a sport grow this fast in my career," said Pam Watts, NIRSA executive director.

The 7-on-7 league, which begins in January 2027, has 55 schools signed up, including powerhouses such as the University of Florida, University of Georgia, Clemson, University of Central Florida and Penn State, among others.

"We were watching the growth in the youth and high school level and knew a big percentage of those folks were going to come to college and want some playing opportunities," Watts said.

Joncich was certainly one of those people.

While she was originally hesitant about continuing her flag football career in college due to her aspirations of becoming a sports medicine physician, Saunders ensured her of the opportunity to do both at the University of Florida.

The Gators have competed as an independent club team – as many other schools have – since 2015. Since then, they have won seven NIRSA national championship titles – two of which Joncich was a part of.

"For most people in the club, [flag football] is somewhere between the sixth and 15th most important thing in their life," Saunders said. "For [Joncich], it was her desire to play flag football and academics – and that was that."

After two years at Florida, however, Joncich received an offer to transfer to Cal Poly and join its Division I varsity program starting in the fall. While it was a tough decision to leave Florida, she knew this opportunity would bring her closer to her Olympic goals.

"I wake up in the morning and I think about throwing a ball or I think about catching a pass," Joncich said. "I always want to be doing it and I always want to be doing something to be getting better at flag."

Cal Poly is one of 13 Division I schools to add a varsity team. In May, the NCAA recommended flag football to become an NCAA championship sport and expects the first championship to occur in the spring of 2028.

"This is everyone's first time in a Division I program," Joncich said. "So there are going to be challenges along the way, but I really do think that we're going to build something that is very long lasting and very respected overall."

While Joncich continues to pave her own path, she's not alone.

"I'm around these women with incredible experience and incredible knowledge of the game," Joncich said. "We don't necessarily have someone to look up to ahead of us per se, but we do have each other to look up to."

As Joncich enters this new chapter of playing Division I flag football and pursuing a spot on the Olympic team, she is now becoming the role model for future generations that she never had.

"I'm really glad that I took the risk," Joncich said. "I believed in the sport and in where it could go."

Joaquín Niemann wires LIV NY

Field Level Media
REUTERS

Joaquín Niemann eagled the par-5 15th hole at Trump National Golf Club Bedminster on his way to completing a wire-to-wire victory Aug. 9 at LIV Golf New York in Bedminster, New Jersey.

Sunday's results solidified Spanish star Jon Rahm as the 2026 individual champion, his third straight title since joining LIV ahead of the 2024 season. He finished a disappointing 8 over at LIV Golf New York, but with one regular-season event to go he can no longer be caught by second-place Bryson DeChambeau.

Niemann, meanwhile, earned his ninth LIV victory in a three-year span and his second of the season, following LIV Golf Korea in the spring.

The Chilean shot a 2-under 69 on Sunday and went 16-under 268 for the week, earning a three-shot win over Harold Varner III.

"I feel like I didn't have the best start. I didn't feel that comfortable," Niemann said. "But as to how the day came out, during the day I started playing better and better, feeling more comfortable and feeling more committed, started committing to my lines, ball started going wherever I was aiming.

"Yeah, that's a great feeling to have, especially coming down the stretch on how tough this golf course is. So yeah, pretty happy and proud of the way I played at the end."

Niemann, 27, raced out to the lead with a 7-under 64 Thursday and a 6-under 65 Friday. Even though he settled for a 1-under 70 in the third round, he entered Sunday with a two-shot cushion over Varner.

Joaquín Niemann is congratulated for the LIV win by President Donald Trump. DENNIS SCHNEIDLER/IMAGN IMAGES

Niemann bogeyed the opening hole and didn't get the stroke back until a birdie at the par-3 seventh. He birdied No. 13 and clung to a two-shot lead when he arrived at No. 15.

He took an aggressive line with a 5-hybrid and landed his second shot just past the flag, then converted a downhill 26-foot putt for eagle, doubling his advantage over Varner.

"I hit a great tee shot with my 3-wood, and then the pin placement, where they put it, I feel like outside the top 20 guys of the leaderboard, probably no one was going to that pin because it's pretty scary," Niemann said. "There's no room to land it, especially how soft the greens are right now.

"I was just (aiming) to the right side of the green, left myself a putt, and yeah, it was not an easy putt for sure. I was going to be pretty happy with two putts there, and it was quite a surprise to make that one. It's one of those that I just got to be grateful about it and just go pick it up and run."

Varner, who catapulted into contention Saturday with a round of 65, could not convert his chances Sunday. He had two birdies through 11 holes, then bogeyed the 12th and made only pars the rest of the way to shoot a 70 and stay at 13 under.

Zimbabwe's Scott Vincent carded a 66 to move to 9 under and tie for third with Englishman Lee Westwood (72), marking Vincent's best finish on the LIV circuit. South Korea's Byeong Hun An (69) rounded out the top five at 7 under.

DeChambeau's Crushers GC won their third team title of the season despite their captain pulling up the rear at 7 over par. Paul Casey of England tied for sixth at 6 under, Anirban Lahiri of India tied for 17th at 1 over par and Charles Howell III was at 4 over par to help the Crushers go 6 over for the week and beat Rahm's Legion XIII and Niemann's Torque by two.

"Yeah, this is what makes team golf, I think, so much better than just personal individual golf because you've got something else to play for," DeChambeau said. "Like I might have been 6, 7, 8 over par going into the third round, but I'm like, 'I need to get this thing back to even par, not just for myself but for my team.'

"It's a bit disappointing and honestly embarrassing to be that far over considering the skill set and the playability that I know I have.

"But you've got to fight for every shot. It's a little different out here."

LIV Michigan team event called off

Tony Paul
The Detroit News

DETROIT – LIV Golf is one-and-done in Michigan.

In news that has been widely speculated about for few weeks, LIV Golf's television host said on the broadcast Aug. 9 that its season-ending team championship tournament scheduled to be played at The Cardinal in Plymouth Township this month won't be happening.

LIV Golf was set to end its season at Saint John's Resort for a second straight year, but the team championship now will instead be staged a week earlier, next week in Indianapolis, LIV Golf TV host Craig Doyle said on Sunday's TNT broadcast following the final round of LIV Golf's tournament in New Jersey.

"That is going to be, at this stage, I think we can call it, is going to be the final event in LIV Golf 2026," Doyle said, speaking of the Indianapolis tournament set for Aug. 20-23.

The news is not at all unexpected, as LIV Golf has been in crisis mode for months trying to secure funding for the future after its chief backer, the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund, cut off the cash.

The team championship at The Cardinal was to have a staggering prize pool of $40 million.

Hezly Rivera wins US all-around again

Cydney Henderson
USA TODAY

PHOENIX – Olympic gold medalist Hezly Rivera had some ground to make up on the second and final day of the 2026 U.S. Gymnastics Championships after an uncharacteristic fall on uneven bars left her in fourth place.

That's when her experience shined through. Rivera turned in a dazzling performance on Aug. 9 to successfully defend her all-around title, finishing with a two-day combined score of 111.95, 1.15 points ahead of Claire Pease (110.8). Rivera also won the balance beam title and finished second overall on floor.

"I think it showed that you can come back after a little mess up or a little mistake," Rivera said after her victory. "It just shows how strong I am mentally because physically everything's there. But the mental aspect of things is definitely where it's at. You can't really do this without having a strong mentality."

A two-woman race between Rivera and Pease, training partners at World Olympic Gymnastics Academy in Texas, emerged entering the final two rotations on Sunday. And with Rivera and Pease being featured in the same group, both the competitors and fans in attendance at Phoenix's Mortgage Matchup Center could see where they stacked up against each other after each event.

Pease entered Sunday tied atop the leaderboard with Skye Blakely. But halfway through Sunday, Pease had a half-point lead over Rivera entering the third rotation on floor.

"I was not watching (the scoreboard)," Rivera said. "I knew it was close because obviously Day 1 and stuff, but I was not paying attention at all … I looked at my scores and then I just looked down everywhere, just trying to keep my head in the game and focused."

Rivera went first on floor and immediately set the tone by sticking the landing on her first tumbling pass. A huge smile spread on Rivera's face and she went on to stick all but one landing to earn a 14.3 on floor.

Next up was Pease. She stepped out of bounds on her first tumbling pass and wasn't able to regain her composure. Pease was on the verge of stepping out of bounds on her third pass, but she landed on one leg and kept her second foot in the air to avoid another deduction. Her overall performance lacked polish and poise, and her 13.2 score on floor ceded the lead to Rivera.

Going into the final rotation on vault, Rivera took a 0.6 lead over Pease. All she needed was a clean vault routine. Rivera had a small hop on her landing but stayed within the boundaries to score a 14.4 and all but solidify a win.

Pease was off-center on her vault and landed out of bounds for a deduction that dropped her vault score to 13.85. She finished second overall with a total two-day combined score of 110.8 and won the uneven bar title.

Hezly Rivera competes on the balance beam during the Xfinity U.S. Gymnastics Championships. CHRIS CODUTO/GETTY IMAGES

"I'm just so grateful to have her by my side as a teammate," Rivera said of Pease. "We are always just having so much fun in the gym … and then outside of the gym, we also have a great bond."

Charleigh Bullock (110.55) finished in third place, followed by Reese Esponda (108.9) in fourth and two-time Olympic gold medalist Jade Carey (108.75) in fifth.

Rivera and Pease automatically qualify for next month's selection camp with a top-2 finish.

The selection camp roster will be rounded out by at least 10 other gymnasts, who will be announced at a later date.

They're all vying to make the five-person team that will go on to represent Team USA at the 2026 World Championships in Rotterdam, Netherlands, in October, marking the first opportunity to qualify for the LA28 Olympics on home soil.

Skye Blakely entered the second and final day of competition tied atop the leaderboard after a solid first day in her return to all-around in elite competition. Blakely opened Sunday on floor, the event she said was the hardest to come back to because it's where she suffered her Achilles injury in 2024.

Disaster struck. Blakely fell right out the gate on her first tumbling pass and she was never able to recover. She had a shaky landing on her next pass and stepped out of bounds on her last tumbling pass. Blakely scored a 11.9 on floor, effectively knocking her out of medal contention.

Reach USA TODAY National Women's Sports Reporter Cydney Henderson at chenderson@gannett.com and follow her on X at @CydHenderson

COMMENTARY

Coach wants players to go pro – but not to Big 12

John Brice
USA TODAY

Georgia. Notre Dame. Oregon. Fresno State?

One of those is not like the others, until you realize it is.

Perhaps quietly, after an ahead-of-schedule nine-win debut season in 2025, Matt Entz has Fresno State as a potential Group of Six College Football Playoff contender and presumptive challenger in the reborn Pac-12.

The Bulldogs, after all, return "14 of 15 starters, depending on how you want to look at it," he told USA TODAY Sports.

Notre Dame and Oregon tout 15 returning starters; Georgia and Southern Cal also are among power conference teams fielding some of the sport's most experienced rosters with at least 14 returners.

There's the potential for more for Fresno.

"I think our players are seeing that 'Hey, this experience is bigger than just me. I can get wherever I want from Fresno State,' " Entz said. "Now, at the same time, we have another successful season, it's going to get harder and harder to retain some of these players because, again, there are lucrative opportunities out there. And I talk about that in recruiting.

"We're utilizing that to keep kids here. We're going to help you get the next contract, some way, somehow. I don't know if that's in the SEC, the Big Ten, or the NFL, but we'll figure it out as we kind of navigate this."

Entz – the former Football Championship Subdivision national title-winning assistant and head coach at North Dakota State – also has a remarkable vision for building his Bulldogs roster for sustainability via new NCAA rules.

After bringing aboard a school-record 15 freshmen as January enrollees, Entz believes the timetable for college football players to contribute is dramatically shifting and instructs his Fresno staff to lean into what the NCAA terms the "age-based eligibility model" and what everyone calls "five-for-five."

"With this five-year rule, what we've started to do with this five-year eligibility piece is say, 'Hey, three years at Fresno State can set you up for the next opportunity,' " Entz told USA TODAY Sports. "And then you still have two years to go to Alabama or Texas. But going to the Big 12 isn't a big enough jump. You have to go to the Big Ten, SEC or NFL."

With more than 20 of his former players in the NFL and Power Four transfer-starters such as Miami running back Marty Brown, a former Entz signee at North Dakota State, Entz and his staff are reshaping the contributor timetable for newcomers.

Entz

"All we've done is we've tried to accelerate that a little bit in our recruiting," said Entz, whose Bulldogs battered Boise State last year and won the Arizona Bowl. "One of the biggest things that we're looking for, of course, they have to be the fit. They got to check all the boxes. Athleticism, toughness, football IQ, character, all those matter.

"But the other piece that we ask now is, 'Are you going to be able to enroll early?' Those 15 players who enrolled early now are going to have an opportunity."

Entz also is embracing the vision of his athletic director, Garrett Klassy, whose experience includes Alabama and Houston in upper-cabinet roles.

Klassy's vision for Fresno's "Valley Co-Op" has Entz touting a "quadrupled" monetary investment into the Bulldogs' football roster and sees Klassy linking it to the region.

"I needed coaches, I needed more boots on the street, for lack of a better term, because it couldn't just be myself, it couldn't just be our Bulldog Foundation staff out there," Klassy says of the program, which he relates to the San Joaquin Valley's 3 million residents and agricultural roots. "And the coaches, it's really resonated with the coaches, and we do have a lot of supporters that give to multiple programs.

"There's two areas where we can make up ground on the rest of the league and that's philanthropic giving. And that's corporate sponsorship, and so we need to grow those immensely. And we're going to announce a record fundraising year, which is $5 million more annually than it was the previous year. Corporate sponsorships with the jersey patches are almost across the finish line; we should be up $2 to $3 million in that area. Now that doesn't make a big difference in the SEC or Big Ten, but that makes a huge difference for us."

Klassy envisions the 4,300-member Valley Co-Op swelling to 7,000 across the next year.

Entz, meanwhile, wants Fresno football to live up to its billing as the region's top draw.

"There has been an investment from an administrative standpoint, understanding that we need to have a football program that's good at Fresno State," said Entz, specifically citing Klassy and Fresno President Dr. Saul Jimenez-Sandoval. "We have a ton of history and tradition. We're the biggest show in town in the Valley, and people want to see a good product on the field."

Seriously, no idea what the Browns are doing

Nate Davis
USA TODAY

Shedeur Sanders (2) and Deshaun Watson (4) are battling for the Browns' QB1 job this summer. MIKE CARDEW/USA TODAY NETWORK

Anyone grasp what the Cleveland Browns are up to? Bueller? Anyone?

Admittedly, it's an ages-old question for one of the NFL's historically inept franchises – one that's never reached the Super Bowl. But the last two months have just added more layers of confusion, at least in my judgment.

I was following along this spring, when Cleveland used free agency and the draft to reload an offensive line that had aged out a stratagem that should also provide an eminently fair evaluation of this summer's (this season's?) quarterback battle. And after what appears to be a sterling 2025 draft, including an apparently cagey decision to move out of the No. 2 spot and forgo selecting Heisman winner Travis Hunter, general manager Andrew Berry positioned himself to choose four players in the top 58 this year. Nicely done, sir.

But then ...

Wait to trade Garrett? Or pay him?

Yes, *then* came the shocking June 1 trade of two-time Defensive Player of the Year (plus five-time All-Pro, newly minted season sack record holder and team legend) Myles Garrett, whom Berry had vowed to never deal and locked into a four-year extension just a year ago ... shortly after Garrett asked out of Cleveland prior to Super Bowl 59.

Stunning as it was, and we can argue whether the Browns got market value for one of the greatest players in their history and one squarely in his prime (even at 30), Berry felt he was getting a sufficient bounty (a first-, second- and third-round pick plus defensive end Jared Verse) to reverse course on Garrett. Yet it immediately called into question Berry's earlier proclamation and makes you wonder why he didn't move him a year earlier, after Garrett had penned a goodbye letter and theoretically might have fetched more had the Browns invited a bidding war ... not to mention the decision to sign him to a $160 million extension with nearly $89 million guaranteed at signing.

Moving forward? The Browns are without their best player and top gate attraction. They're eating $47 million in dead Garrett salary cap charges over the next two seasons. But fine, Garrett's championship window didn't align with the Browns' to the degree they've ever had one since their 1999 rebirth so embrace the youth movement, get something at least sizable in return for Garrett, including Verse, who was the key to the trade all along according to Berry.

But then ...

Why extend Ward and Delpit?

Berry extended DBs Denzel Ward and Grant Delpit with Ward getting two years and $62.2 million ($49.8 million guaranteed), making him the league's top-paid cornerback ... for the second time.

Say what now?

I don't want to take anything away from Ward, a five-time Pro Bowler who grew up in Ohio and was drafted out of Ohio State eight years ago, making him quite the local hero who's done well in this NFL wasteland. Delpit (3 years, $48 million) isn't nearly as decorated, though has been a reliable starter for the last four seasons. But both are on their third contracts. Neither has played in a playoff win. Neither has had to play without the benefit of Garrett wrecking shop in front of them. Jim Schwartz, who did such an exceptional job deploying them while running this defense for the past three seasons, is also gone. So why pay premium prices for a pair of aging veterans when your team seems to be at least a year away from being a year away and they don't project as championship cornerstones, either?

Said Berry: "Denzel and Grant are in the primes of their careers they're high-level players, they're high-level people. Those are the types we want to continually make investments in."

But what now after divesting Garrett, who will literally cost this franchise for the next two seasons and while staring at the prospect of $86 million in cap charges for quarterback Deshaun Watson ... *once he's presumably off the roster next spring*? Oh yeah, next spring, which would be the first opportunity to extend Verse, which would be early but could likely also mean a discount. And, oh yeah, next spring which would also be the time to pursue free agents given the fairly obvious signal that owner Jimmy Haslam expects to have a winning product on the field by 2027.

"(N)ext year might be the time to dip into free agency," Haslam said last week. "You have to realize that when you go into free agency, you're going to overpay, you just are. So, you've got to keep that in mind and balance that with the value of draft picks."

Sure seems like Berry's making that potential balancing act precarious.

Especially given ...

The muddy quarterback situation

Watson and Sanders are locked in a battle for the QB1 role, each alternating snaps with the first team every other day of training camp in a duel that may largely be performative for both.

"I love Cleveland," Watson said earlier this month when asked if he might re-sign. "Me and my wife have our house on the east side, so we're here all the time. We were here this summer. If you ask around, I'm at pretty much all the restaurants, hanging out, so I haven't had a bad experience outside of different times in the stadium. I don't know why that narrative is out there that people think that I don't like Cleveland. My family and I have been enjoying our time here, if the opportunity shows up, we'll see where it goes."

We sure know how it's gone.

From that odious contract, to the lack of local buy-in, to the stench of off-field behavior that followed him from Houston, to the injuries, to the lost draft capital, to the loss of Baker Mayfield, the 2022 trade for Watson is perhaps the worst in NFL history. And the notion that he'd return ... is almost as ridiculous as the notion he should potentially start ahead of Sanders, a second-year player who needs a lengthy look at some point as Berry and company assess their options ahead of what's expected to be a QB-rich draft next year, when the Browns own two first-round picks thanks to the Garrett trade.

And given Cleveland fans seem to embrace Sanders to a degree perhaps approximate to their animus for Watson, why not just give the young guy a long leash and park the very lame duck on the bench? If Sanders plays well, maybe your quarterback question is answered. If he doesn't, then you're primely positioned to get his replacement at the top of next year's board – maybe without having to invest further capital. Alas, this is Cleveland.

"I haven't coached any of these four quarterbacks until now, I haven't been around them," said first-year head coach Todd Monken recently. "I don't have any preconceived notions of who they've been or where they're going. I just take it day to day, we install (the playbook), and as we get further along, we'll have a better idea."

Oh, we've already got a pretty idea, coach. A team coming off a 5-12 season but unable to get out of the AFC North cellar in 2025 – when the Baltimore Ravens and Cincinnati Bengals played well below their potential – most certainly seems relegated to stay in the basement, barring catastrophe elsewhere in the division. Yet the Browns, with their young talent – and rookie wideouts KC Concepcion and Denzel Boston have been lighting up camp – seem to have convinced themselves they're already on their way and are operating accordingly.

"I would say this, and we never do this, but I think the odds are for us to win five and a half games," Haslam mused. "I'll take the over."

Seems awfully optimistic for an owner, one focused on opening a new stadium in three years, whose team hasn't hit the over on 5 ½ in seven of his 14 seasons in the suite – Monken's predecessor, Kevin Stefanski, responsible for much of the relative success.

"(O)ur on-field performance," admitted Haslam, "is something that keeps us awake at night. It's unacceptable, and I hate it most for our fans, because they deserve better than that. We're working hard every day to not have that same kind of performance we've had in the past."

Working hard? Maybe. But working smart? Jury's (still) out, Jimmy.

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NOTICES — LEGAL NOTICES

Lennar Corporation, 5505 Waterford District Drive, Miami, FL 33126, is providing notice about an event that may have impacted the sensitive personal information of certain individuals. This notice provides details about the event, measures it has taken in response, and additional steps impacted individuals can take to help protect their sensitive personal information, if they feel it is necessary to do so. On March 30, 2026, Lennar Corporation became aware of a potential issue involving a limited portion of its information systems. Lennar Corporation immediately took steps to secure its systems and, with the assistance of a third-party forensics team, investigate the extent of this activity. It was determined that an unauthorized party used sophisticated social engineering tactics to access some of Lennar Corporation's systems between March 24, 2026 and March 30, 2026. Lennar Corporation assessed what sensitive personal information may have been impacted in connection with the event. Based on this assessment, which concluded on July 30, 2026, the sensitive personal information involved in the event may have included names, contact information, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, passport or other government ID information, driver's license or other state ID information, and financial account information. A very small number of individuals may have had their health insurance ID and/or medical-related information involved in the event. Not all categories of personal information were impacted for each individual. In response to the event, Lennar Corporation contacted law enforcement and notified regulators. Following the event, to help prevent something similar from occurring, Lennar Corporation implemented additional technical security measures to further protect its systems. In addition, while Lennar Corporation is not aware of any misuse of sensitive personal information in connection with the event, out of an abundance of caution, it has secured the services of Kroll to provide two years of identity monitoring services to impacted individuals at no cost. Impacted individuals have until November 13, 2026 to activate and take advantage of these identity monitoring services. Lennar Corporation encourages impacted individuals, as a best practice, to remain vigilant to the possibility of fraud by reviewing account statements and monitoring free credit reports for any unauthorized activity and reporting any such activity. For questions, call (844) 958-8940, Mon-Fri, 9:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. ET, excluding major U.S. holidays.

NOTICES — PUBLIC NOTICE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for Unified Communications and Contact Center Solutions to result in a procurement solution for use by its Participating Entities.

Sourcewell Participating Entities include thousands of governmental, higher education, K-12 education, nonprofit, tribal government, and other public agencies located in the United States and Canada.

Sourcewell encourages the use of Small, Minority-owned, Women's Business Enterprise, Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (S/M/WBE/VBE) suppliers both as prime and subcontractors and encourages the participation of these suppliers in the solicitation process.

A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov.

Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.

Proposals are due no later than September 29, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. Central Time, and late proposals will not be considered.

NOTICES — PUBLIC NOTICE

REQUEST FOR BIDS – PEPPM Cooperative Purchasing Program

Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit #16 (CSIU) is accepting sealed bids for its **PEPPM 2027 Product Line Bid** and **PEPPM 2027Apple Bid**, from bidders for technology equipment, software, services, supplies, and furniture to local educational agencies and other eligible public agencies in Pennsylvania and optionally other states for the PEPPM Cooperative Purchasing Program.

Bid Due Date: October 8, 2026, 3:00 pm ET
Submission: Electronic bids at www.epylon.com
Public Bid Opening: October 8, 2026, 3:00 pm ET, CSIU, 90 Lawton Lane, Milton, PA 17847. CSIU reserves the right to broadcast the opening of bids via teleconference or video conference, in lieu of an in-person meeting.

Registration: Required at www.epylon.com (no fee)

Details and Bid Documents available at: www.peppm.org/bids

Bid Withdrawal: No bidder may withdraw its bid for 90 days after the bid opening date.

Installation of certain products purchased under the contracts may be subject to applicable prevailing wage laws and rates. Reference is made to the prevailing minimum wage rates applicable to such installation.

The CSIU reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids and/or to waive any or all informalities or irregularities in a bid.

MARKETPLACE — BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

Read about former Vice President Kamala Harris' sordid affair with the Director Of The Spy Syndicate. To Purchase for $1.49, log on to Amazon.com and type in "ebook the Kamala Harris sordid affair" in the search engine & "How To Get Women, The Talk Method" $39.95. To purchase, log on to Amazon.com and type in "How To Get Women, The Talk Method" in the search engine.

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FOR THE RECORD

All times ET

MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	71	46	.607	–
N.Y. Yankees	66	52	.559	5½
Boston	64	53	.547	7
Baltimore	57	61	.483	14½
Toronto	56	63	.471	16

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chi. White Sox	60	56	.517	–
Cleveland	58	60	.492	3
Detroit	58	60	.492	3
Minnesota	58	61	.487	3½
Kansas City	49	70	.412	12½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	60	58	.508	–
Texas	59	59	.500	1
Seattle	56	63	.471	4½
Athletics	47	71	.398	13
L.A. Angels	45	73	.381	15

NATIONAL LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	71	47	.602	–
Philadelphia	63	56	.529	8½
Miami	60	59	.504	11½
Washington	59	61	.492	13
N.Y. Mets	52	67	.437	19½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	74	44	.627	–
Chicago Cubs	69	50	.580	5½
St. Louis	59	59	.500	15
Pittsburgh	58	62	.483	17
Cincinnati	56	61	.479	17½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	70	48	.593	–
Arizona	63	56	.529	7½
San Diego	61	57	.517	9
San Francisco	49	69	.415	21
Colorado	46	72	.390	24

Sunday's Scores
Washington 7, Cincinnati 1
Athletics 4, Boston 3
Philadelphia 7, Toronto 6, 12 innings
N.Y. Mets 11, Pittsburgh 1
Atlanta 2, N.Y. Yankees 1, 10 innings
Miami 12, L.A. Angels 3
Chi. White Sox 5, Cleveland 3
Chicago Cubs 10, Kansas City 2
Milwaukee 4, Minnesota 3, 10 innings
St. Louis 7, Colorado 4
Baltimore 10, Texas 5
Detroit 3, San Francisco 1, 10 innings
Arizona 4, L.A. Dodgers 2
Tampa Bay 4, Seattle 1
San Diego 7, Houston 2

Monday's Games
Boston at Toronto
N.Y. Mets at Atlanta
Baltimore at Minnesota
Philadelphia at St. Louis
Texas at L.A. Angels
Colorado at Arizona
Tampa Bay at Athletics
Milwaukee at San Diego
Houston at San Francisco
Kansas City at L.A. Dodgers

Tuesday's Games
Cleveland at Detroit, 6:40 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Miami, 6:40 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at Washington, 6:45 p.m.
Seattle at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
Boston at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
N.Y. Mets at Atlanta, 7:15 p.m.
Cincinnati at Chi. White Sox, 7:40 p.m.
Baltimore at Minnesota, 7:40 p.m.
Philadelphia at St. Louis, 7:45 p.m.
Texas at L.A. Angels, 9:38 p.m.
Colorado at Arizona, 9:40 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.
Milwaukee at San Diego, 9:40 p.m.
Houston at San Francisco, 9:45 p.m.
Kansas City at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

Wednesday's Games
Baltimore at Minnesota, 1:40 p.m.
Philadelphia at St. Louis, 2:15 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Athletics, 3:05 p.m.
Colorado at Arizona, 3:40 p.m.
Houston at San Francisco, 3:45 p.m.
Milwaukee at San Diego, 4:10 p.m.
Cleveland at Detroit, 6:40 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Miami, 6:40 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at Washington, 6:45 p.m.
Seattle at N.Y. Yankees, 7:05 p.m.
Boston at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
N.Y. Mets at Atlanta, 7:15 p.m.
Cincinnati at Chi. White Sox, 7:40 p.m.
Kansas City at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.
Texas at L.A. Angels, 10:10 p.m.

SOCCER

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	12	2	4	40	35	14
Inter Miami CF	11	2	5	38	45	32
New England	9	6	3	30	28	23
Chicago	9	6	2	29	32	23
NY City FC	7	6	5	26	31	24
Cincinnati	7	6	5	26	45	44
Charlotte FC	7	7	4	25	29	27
NY Red Bulls	7	7	4	25	29	39
D.C. United	5	5	8	23	26	29
Orlando City	6	10	2	20	30	47
Columbus	5	8	5	20	26	28
Toronto FC	3	7	8	17	24	32
Philadelphia	4	10	4	16	25	33
CF Montreal	4	10	4	16	24	35
Atlanta	3	12	3	12	19	33

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	10	3	4	34	38	17
Los Angeles FC	10	5	4	34	35	19
San Jose	10	5	3	33	37	24
Houston	10	6	2	32	27	24
Real Salt Lake	8	6	3	27	29	25
FC Dallas	7	5	6	27	32	25
Saint Louis	7	6	5	26	24	24
Portland	7	8	3	24	33	33
Seattle	7	7	3	24	20	22
Minnesota	6	6	6	24	20	25
Colorado	7	10	1	22	27	25
LA Galaxy	5	7	7	22	24	29
San Diego FC	5	7	6	21	32	29
Austin FC	4	9	5	17	22	36
Sporting KC	4	12	2	14	18	46

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Saturday's Score
New England 0, Houston 2

NWSL

	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Gotham	12	3	4	40	24	12
Washington	11	5	3	36	29	17
Utah	10	6	3	33	32	21
San Diego	10	7	2	32	24	20
Portland	9	6	4	31	32	28
North Carolina	9	6	3	30	32	26
Kansas City	9	7	3	30	30	26
Angel City	7	7	3	24	26	19
Seattle	7	7	3	24	22	23
Denver	6	7	5	23	24	24
Orlando	7	10	2	23	23	29
Boston	5	9	5	20	22	28
Houston	5	8	5	20	20	26
Bay	5	9	4	19	18	24
Louisville	5	11	2	17	24	35
Chicago	4	13	1	13	9	33

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Friday's Score
Gotham 1, San Diego 0

Saturday's Scores
North Carolina 4, Washington 3
Houston 1, Kansas City 1
Denver 2, Utah 1

Sunday's Scores
Portland 4, Boston 3
Chicago 0, Bay 0
Seattle 2, Angel City 2

Friday's Games
Kansas City at Gotham, 8 p.m.
Bay at Utah, 10 p.m.
Chicago at Seattle, 10 p.m.
Denver at San Diego, 10 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Boston at Louisville, 6:30 p.m.
Orlando at Portland, 8:45 p.m.

Sunday's Games
Houston at North Carolina, 7 p.m.
Washington at Angel City, 9 p.m.

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	20	12	.625	–
Washington	19	12	.613	½
Atlanta	19	12	.613	½
N.Y. Liberty	20	13	.606	½
Chicago	12	20	.375	8
Toronto	10	21	.323	9½
Connecticut	8	23	.258	11½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	27	7	.794	–
Golden State	23	9	.719	3
Las Vegas	22	11	.667	4½
Dallas	19	14	.576	7½
Portland	13	19	.406	13
L.A. Sparks	12	19	.387	13½
Phoenix	12	22	.353	15
Seattle	6	28	.176	21

Sunday's Scores
N.Y. Liberty 111, Las Vegas 71
Washington 95, Phoenix 75
Minnesota 103, Dallas 90
Golden State 84, L.A. Sparks 78

Monday's Games
Toronto at Atlanta
Chicago at Seattle

Tuesday's Games
N.Y. Liberty at Indiana, 7:30 p.m.
Washington at Las Vegas, 10 p.m.
Phoenix at L.A. Sparks, 10 p.m.

Wednesday's Games
Toronto at Dallas, 8 p.m.
Chicago at Golden State, 10 p.m.
Minnesota at Portland, 10 p.m.

Thursday's Games
Atlanta at Connecticut, 7 p.m.
L.A. Sparks at N.Y. Liberty, 8 p.m.
Washington at Las Vegas, 10 p.m.

Friday's Games
Dallas at Indiana, 7:30 p.m.
Portland at Seattle, 10 p.m.

CFL

EAST DIVISION

	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
Montreal	8	1	.889	321	247
Toronto	4	4	.500	253	249
Hamilton	3	6	.333	211	261
Ottawa	0	8	.000	186	289

WEST DIVISION

	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
Saskatchewan	6	2	.750	274	215
Edmonton	6	3	.667	259	248
Winnipeg	4	4	.500	204	243
Calgary	4	5	.444	352	297
BC	3	5	.375	214	225

Thursday's Score
Toronto 33, Calgary 30

Friday's Score
Saskatchewan 42, Ottawa 20

Saturday's Games
Montreal 48, Edmonton 30
BC 27, Hamilton 24

Thursday's Game
BC vs. Calgary, 9 p.m.

Friday's Game
Ottawa vs. Winnipeg, 8:30 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Toronto vs. Edmonton, 3 p.m.
Saskatchewan vs. Hamilton, 7 p.m.

NFL

Preseason

Thursday's Games
Detroit at Cincinnati, 7 p.m.
Green Bay at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Indianapolis at New England, 7:30 p.m.
L.A. Chargers at Houston, 8 p.m.
Arizona at Las Vegas, 8 p.m.
Tennessee at San Francisco, 9 p.m.

Friday's Games
Miami at Washington, 7 p.m.
Denver at Atlanta, 7 p.m.
Tampa Bay at N.Y. Jets, 7 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Carolina at Buffalo, 1 p.m.
Minnesota at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.
Cleveland at Chicago, 1 p.m.
Jacksonville at New Orleans, 4 p.m.
L.A. Rams at Kansas City, 4 p.m.
Philadelphia at Baltimore, 7 p.m.
Dallas at Seattle, 8 p.m.

DEALS

FOOTBALL
National Football League
CAROLINA PANTHERS – TE Chamon Metayer cut. G Joshua Gray signed.
HOUSTON TEXANS – WR Juwann Winfree signed. LB Sione Takitaki Placed on IR undisclosed.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS – RB Ja'Quinden Jackson signed to Philadelphia Eagles.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS – DT David Blay Jr. signed to Philadelphia Eagles. TE Hunter Henry re-signed Two-year extension (through 2028).
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES – TE Dae'Quan Wright cut. G Jaeden Roberts cut. DE Tarron Jackson signed/unrestricted free agent One-year contract (through 2026). RB Ja'Quinden Jackson signed. DT David Blay Jr. signed. RB Elijah Mitchell Placed on IR undisclosed.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS – DE Tarron Jackson signed/unrestricted free agent to Philadelphia Eagles One-year contract (through 2026).

AUTO RACING

NASCAR Cup Series Iowa Corn 350 Powered by Ethanol
Iowa Speedway
Sunday
1. (6) Ty Gibbs, Joe Gibbs Racing, 350, 69 pts.
2. (22) Chris Bell, Joe Gibbs Racing, 350, 50.
3. (1) Ryan Blaney, Team Penske, 350, 47.
4. (13) Josh Berry, Wood Brothers, 350, 33.
5. (29) Denny Hamlin, Joe Gibbs, 350, 37.
6. (20) Chase Briscoe, Joe Gibbs, 350, 40.
7. (9) Ross Chastain, Trackhouse, 350, 43.
8. (25) AJ Allmendinger, Kaulig, 350, 29.
9. (19) William Byron, Hendrick MS, 350, 32.
10. (7) A. Dillon, Richard Childress, 350, 33.
11. (8) Connor Zilisch, Trackhouse, 349, 29.
12. (26) Bubba Wallace, 23XI Racing, 349, 25.
13. (27) Chris Buescher, RFK Racing, 349, 24.
14. (3) Joey Logano, Team Penske, 349, 41.
15. (32) Chase Elliott, Hendrick MS, 349, 22.
16. (14) Zane Smith, Front Row MS, 349, 24.
17. (15) Noah Gragson, Front Row MS, 349, 20.
18. (16) Ricky Stenhouse Jr, HYAK MS, 349, 19.
19. (21) J. H. Nemechek, Legacy MC, 349, 18.
20. (35) Ryan Preece, RFK Racing, 349, 17.
21. (28) Riley Herbst, 23XI Racing, 349, 16.
22. (17) Todd Gilliland, Front Row MS, 349, 15.
23. (33) Daniel Suárez, Spire MS, 349, 14.
24. (31) Ty Dillon, Kaulig Racing, 349, 13.
25. (11) Michael McDowell, Spire MS, 349, 12.
26. (24) Austin Hill, Richard Childress, 349, 0.
27. (4) Brad Keselowski, RFK Racing, 348, 10.
28. (36) Cole Custer, Haas Factory, 348, 9.
29. (12) Austin Cindric, Team Penske, 348, 8.
30. (23) S. Van Gisbergen, Trackhouse, 347, 7.
31. (18) Carson Hocevar, Spire MS, 347, 6.
32. (34) Cody Ware, Rick Ware Racing, 347, 5.
33. (2) Kyle Larson, Hendrick MS, 332, 12.
34. (30) Alex Bowman, Hendrick Motorsports, 194, Accident 3.
35. (10) Erik Jones, Legacy MC, 4, Accident 2.
36. (5) T. Reddick, 23XI Racing, 3, Accident 1.

GOLF

PGA Tour
Wyndham Championship
Greensboro, NC
Sedgefield Country Club
Purse: $8.5 million
Yardage: 7,131; Par: 70
Sunday's Final Round

Michael Brennan	66-65-63-64–258 (-22)
Beau Hossler	61-67-66-67–261 (-19)
Benjamin James	62-67-72-61–262 (-18)
Kevin Yu	65-68-65-66–264 (-16)
Harry Hall	69-66-64-66–265 (-15)
Tom Kim	65-67-63-70–265 (-15)
Hideki Matsuyama	65-69-66-66–266 (-14)
Alex Noren	66-65-65-70–266 (-14)
Andrew Novak	68-68-67-63–266 (-14)
Alex Smalley	67-64-65-70–266 (-14)
Matt Wallace	71-66-64-65–266 (-14)
Nico Echavarria	68-69-62-68–267 (-13)
Billy Horschel	65-66-70-66–267 (-13)
Zachary Bauchou	64-69-68-67–268 (-12)
Sungjae Im	67-68-67-66–268 (-12)
Jordan Smith	65-64-70-69–268 (-12)
Justin Thomas	66-70-66-66–268 (-12)
Davis Thompson	64-68-65-71–268 (-12)
Doug Ghim	64-67-72-66–269 (-11)
Kevin Roy	68-66-67-68–269 (-11)
Jordan Spieth	68-69-65-67–269 (-11)
Chandler Phillips	67-67-68-68–270 (-10)
David Skinns	66-65-69-70–270 (-10)
Jackson Suber	67-65-70-68–270 (-10)
Rafael Campos	65-69-69-68–271 (-9)
Davis Chatfield	69-68-69-65–271 (-9)
Rico Hoey	66-65-71-69–271 (-9)
Maverick McNealy	67-67-73-64–271 (-9)
Eric Cole	63-69-71-69–272 (-8)
Tom Hoge	65-67-73-67–272 (-8)
Mackenzie Hughes	68-67-72-65–272 (-8)
Ben Kohles	66-71-65-70–272 (-8)
Jackson Koivun	67-68-66-71–272 (-8)
Denny McCarthy	64-68-70-70–272 (-8)
Matt McCarty	66-70-70-66–272 (-8)
Aaron Rai	69-67-69-67–272 (-8)
Hayden Springer	64-69-70-69–272 (-8)
C. Bezuidenhout	68-69-66-70–273 (-7)
Trace Crowe	70-64-72-67–273 (-7)
Joel Dahmen	68-66-68-71–273 (-7)
Austin Eckroat	67-68-68-70–273 (-7)
Keith Mitchell	65-72-70-66–273 (-7)
John Parry	66-70-68-69–273 (-7)
Taylor Pendrith	66-69-74-64–273 (-7)
Marco Penge	73-63-74-63–273 (-7)
Chad Ramey	66-66-72-69–273 (-7)
Webb Simpson	70-67-65-71–273 (-7)
Kevin Streelman	69-66-69-69–273 (-7)
Keegan Bradley	70-67-69-68–274 (-6)
Ricky Castillo	67-68-70-69–274 (-6)
Patrick Fishburn	68-68-68-70–274 (-6)
Rasmus Hojgaard	68-68-72-66–274 (-6)
Sahith Theegala	62-69-69-74–274 (-6)

LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL

N. Carolina beats Kentucky for title

Jon Hoefling
USA TODAY Network

North Carolina won the Little League Softball World Series, defeating Kentucky 2-0 behind an impeccable complete game from pitcher Anna-Lynn Clark.

The defense and pitching were phenomenal Aug. 9 in Greenville, South Carolina, with only one Kentucky runner reaching scoring position, but that happened in the first inning. From then on, it was just diving catches, weak contact and strikeouts.

The squad from Clayton, North Carolina, did not get off to a hot start, as it lost its starting second baseman Sophie Catarazolli to injury in the first inning. But the Johnston County Little League players clearly rallied behind their teammate, who was seen crying tears of joy in her father's arms after the game.

Clark's sixth inning was just as dominant as the previous five. Not only did Clark strike out the first batter of the inning, but she induced a weak ground ball to second to the next batter.

The final batter of the game made the best contact, drilling a fly ball to left field, but well within the park. The left fielder did not need to move much to snag the fly ball, earning North Carolina the championship.

This is the second consecutive year that the championship game has been won via shutout.

North Carolina's win is the state's fourth overall LLSWS title and first since 2024, when Pitt County Girls Softball Little League from Winterville won the championship.

The Johnston County All-Stars from Clayton, North Carolina, are the World Series champs.
PROVIDED BY LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL WORLD SERIES

WEATHER

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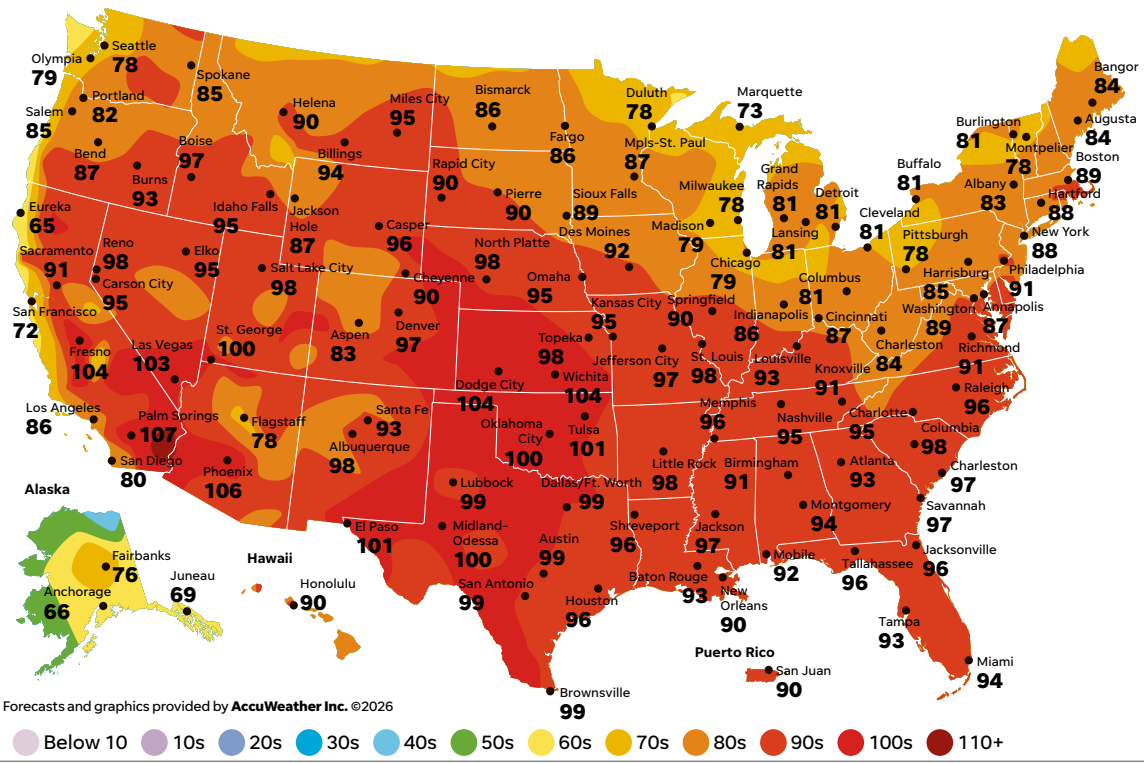
TODAY'S FORECAST

Thunderstorms will stretch from northern **Illinois** to the **mid-Atlantic** today. Storms will be capable of producing flash flooding and localized damaging wind gusts. Farther south, typical summertime storms will dot the **Southeast** amid steamy conditions.

Another area of severe storms will develop across the northern **Plains** late in the day and at night, with flooding downpours, hail and damaging winds possible. Monsoonal storms will extend across the **Southwest**, while hot weather persists across the **Rockies** and **Plains**.

Temperatures across the **Plains** will run 5-15 degrees above historical averages. The **Northwest** will be dry, although smoke from ongoing wildfires across eastern **Washington** and **Oregon** will bring a hazy sky to the nation.

TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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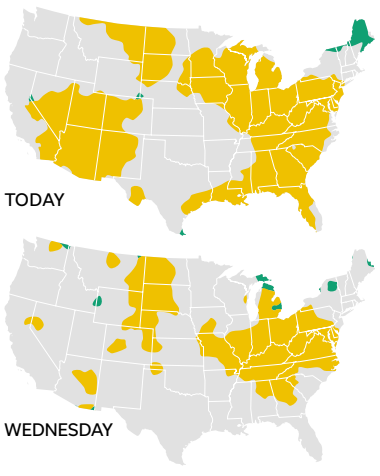
PRECIPITATION FORECAST

T-storms Rain Snow Ice/mix



EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through Sunday

HOTTEST: 123° Death Valley, Calif.
COLDEST: 35° Stanley, Idaho

TOP TRAVEL CITIES Air quality index (AQI)

ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	CHARLOTTE
TUE Stray t-storm 93/74	TUE A P.M. t-storm 88/72	TUE Very warm 89/70	TUE Stray t-storm 95/73
WED A P.M. t-storm 92/73	WED Heavy t-storm 86/71	WED Clouds, sun 83/68	WED Stray t-storm 97/73
THU Stray t-storm 96/77	THU T-storm 90/72	THU T-storm 84/67	THU Stray t-storm 96/78
AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate

CHICAGO	DALLAS/FT. WORTH	DENVER	DETROIT
TUE T-storms 79/70	TUE Very warm 99/81	TUE Stray t-storm 97/69	TUE Stray t-storm 81/66
WED Stray t-storm 81/69	WED Breezy, hot 101/81	WED Stray t-storm 95/64	WED T-storm 83/65
THU Not as warm 78/68	THU Breezy, warm 101/79	THU Heavy t-storm 79/61	THU Humid 80/65
AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate

HONOLULU	HOUSTON	LAS VEGAS	LOS ANGELES
TUE Showers 90/76	TUE Stray t-storm 96/78	TUE Stray t-shower 103/84	TUE Partly sunny 86/69
WED A P.M. shower 89/76	WED Very warm 98/79	WED Stray t-storm 101/81	WED Partly sunny 84/68
THU Showers around 90/77	THU Very warm 97/78	THU Stray t-storm 99/80	THU Partly sunny 82/67
AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Good

MIAMI	MPLS-ST. PAUL	NEW ORLEANS	NEW YORK
TUE Showers 94/80	TUE Stray t-storm 87/70	TUE Stray t-storm 90/79	TUE Stray t-storm 88/74
WED Partly sunny 93/79	WED Clearing 86/69	WED Stray t-storm 92/77	WED Clouds, sun 84/73
THU Showers around 92/81	THU Partly sunny 85/64	THU Stray t-storm 95/78	THU Stray t-storm 85/72
AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate

ORLANDO	PHILADELPHIA	PHOENIX	SALT LAKE CITY
TUE Stray t-storm 95/78	TUE A P.M. t-storm 91/73	TUE A P.M. t-storm 106/84	TUE Hazy sunshine 98/73
WED Partly sunny 95/76	WED Humid 86/73	WED Stray t-storm 102/81	WED Stray t-storm 91/70
THU Stray t-storm 94/77	THU Stray t-storm 88/73	THU Stray t-storm 99/84	THU Stray t-storm 83/66
AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Unhealthy s/g

SAN DIEGO	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	WASHINGTON
TUE Humid 80/71	TUE Partly sunny 72/59	TUE Mostly sunny 78/59	TUE A P.M. t-storm 89/74
WED Partly sunny 79/70	WED Clearing 74/60	WED Some sun 75/59	WED Heavy t-storm 87/72
THU Partly sunny 78/71	THU P.M. sun 73/61	THU Mostly sunny 80/58	THU T-storm 91/76
AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate

c Cloudy **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **pc** Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **t** Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

	TODAY	WED
Akron, Ohio	78/66t	81/64t
Albany, N.Y.	83/62pc	84/62pc
Albuquerque	98/70t	96/68t
Allentown, Pa.	86/67t	85/64pc
Amarillo, Texas	100/73s	102/73s
Anaheim, Calif.	89/68pc	85/68pc
Anchorage, Alaska	66/56c	66/54r
Aspen, Colo.	83/52t	76/52t
Atlantic City, N.J.	90/74t	82/71pc
Augusta, Ga.	96/73t	97/73t
Austin, Texas	99/78pc	101/79pc
Bakersfield, Calif.	105/79s	100/76pc
Baton Rouge, La.	93/77t	94/76t
Billings, Mont.	94/63h	85/60pc
Birmingham, Ala.	91/74t	93/74t
Bismarck, N.D.	86/60t	81/59t
Boise, Idaho	97/63h	95/64pc
Buffalo, N.Y.	81/62pc	81/65pc
Burlington, Vt.	81/63pc	80/62pc
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	86/70t	86/70t
Charleston, S.C.	97/77t	97/77t
Charleston, W.Va.	84/70t	83/70t
Cheyenne, Wyo.	90/62pc	86/59t
Cincinnati	87/68t	87/69t
Cleveland	81/65t	82/67t
Colorado Springs	94/67sh	91/62t
Columbia, S.C.	98/75t	99/75t
Columbus, Ohio	81/69t	83/69t
Corpus Christi, Texas	97/79s	97/80w
Dayton, Ohio	83/68t	83/69t
Daytona Beach, Fla.	94/76t	93/75t
Des Moines, Iowa	92/71t	88/71t
Duluth, Minn.	78/58pc	80/58pc
Durham, N.C.	95/72t	93/71t
El Paso, Texas	101/78s	100/74pc
Fairbanks, Alaska	76/53pc	79/52pc
Flagstaff, Ariz.	78/56t	73/55t
Fargo, N.D.	86/63pc	85/59s
Fort Myers, Fla.	95/78t	95/77t
Fort Smith, Ark.	101/79pc	102/81pc
Fort Wayne, Ind.	80/67t	83/67t
Fresno, Calif.	104/73s	99/69s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	81/63t	83/65t
Green Bay, Wis.	81/62t	80/63t
Greensboro, N.C.	94/71t	92/72t
Greenville, S.C.	94/72pc	95/72t
Harrisburg, Pa.	85/71t	86/69t
Hartford, Conn.	88/64pc	86/62pc
Indianapolis	86/71t	85/71t
Islip, N.Y.	89/70pc	85/69pc
Jackson, Miss.	97/77pc	98/77t
Jacksonville, Fla.	96/76t	95/75t
Jefferson City, Mo.	97/76s	96/77t
Kansas City	95/77pc	95/76t
Key West, Fla.	92/83t	91/83pc
Knoxville, Tenn.	91/73t	92/74t
Laredo, Texas	106/80pc	107/80w
Lexington, Ky.	90/71t	91/71t
Lincoln, Neb.	94/69s	92/71pc
Little Rock, Ark.	98/79s	99/79t
Long Beach, Calif.	87/69s	83/71pc
Louisville, Ky.	93/75t	93/74t
Lubbock, Texas	99/77s	102/78pc
Madison, Wis.	79/65t	83/67t
Manchester, N.H.	87/63pc	87/62s
Memphis, Tenn.	96/79pc	97/79t
Milwaukee	78/68t	80/67t
Mobile, Ala.	92/76t	94/75t
Modesto, Calif.	96/64s	92/63pc
Montgomery, Ala.	94/76t	93/74t
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	93/77t	96/78t
Nags Head, N.C.	90/77pc	91/76t
Nashville, Tenn.	95/76t	95/75t
Newark, N.J.	91/74t	90/71pc
New Haven, Conn.	86/69pc	86/68pc
Norfolk, Va.	93/75pc	91/77t
Oakland, Calif.	73/59pc	74/61pc
Oklahoma City	100/76s	102/77s
Omaha, Neb.	95/72s	92/71pc
Palm Springs, Calif.	107/85t	105/82pc
Pensacola, Fla.	91/78t	92/78t
Pierre, S.D.	90/64t	84/64t
Pittsburgh	78/67t	82/66t
Portland, Maine	86/61pc	81/63s
Portland, Ore.	82/63pc	78/60pc
Providence, R.I.	89/66pc	85/65pc
Raleigh, N.C.	96/74t	96/74t
Rapid City, S.D.	90/62t	84/62t
Reno, Nev.	98/65s	92/64t
Richmond, Va.	91/72t	90/73t
Rochester, N.Y.	82/59pc	80/62pc
Sacramento, Calif.	91/59s	91/61s
San Antonio	99/79s	101/78pc
San Jose, Calif.	83/61pc	82/62pc
Santa Fe, N.M.	93/62t	92/59t
Sarasota, Fla.	93/78t	91/79s
Savannah, Ga.	97/76t	96/75t
Scottsdale, Ariz.	104/83t	99/80t
Shreveport, La.	96/78pc	100/78pc
Sioux Falls, S.D.	89/67t	86/65pc
South Bend, Ind.	78/68t	82/67t
Spokane, Wash.	85/59s	85/57h
Springfield, Mo.	97/76s	98/76t
Springfield, Ill.	90/70t	89/71t
St. Louis	98/78pc	95/78t
St. Petersburg, Fla.	93/78t	93/79pc
Syracuse, N.Y.	83/62pc	84/63pc
Tallahassee, Fla.	96/75t	94/75t
Tampa, Fla.	93/80t	94/80pc
Toledo, Ohio	82/65t	83/64t
Topeka, Kan.	98/78s	98/77t
Tucson, Ariz.	97/76t	89/74t
Tupelo, Miss.	93/75pc	95/76t
Tulsa, Okla.	101/81s	104/84pc
Virginia Beach, Va.	90/76s	88/77t
Wichita, Kan.	104/78s	104/81pc
Wilmington, Del.	88/71t	84/69t
Winston-Salem, N.C.	93/73t	93/72t
Worcester, Mass.	83/66pc	82/66pc

WORLD CITIES

	TODAY	WED
Beijing	90/75t	79/72r
Buenos Aires	52/47c	52/47r
Cancun, Mexico	93/77t	92/77sh
Dubai, UAE	108/92s	107/94s
Frankfurt	85/59s	89/63s
Hong Kong	97/86pc	94/85t
Istanbul	88/73pc	89/75s
Jerusalem	90/72s	90/73s
Johannesburg	42/36sh	50/35c
London	82/60s	93/65s
Mexico City	77/55sh

LEISTIKOW'S NASCAR CUP SERIES THOUGHTS

Ty Gibbs shows he's a viable title threat

Chad Leistikow
The Des Moines Register | USA TODAY Network

Ty Gibbs burns out his tires at the finish line after winning the Iowa Corn 350, his second career NASCAR Cup Series win. REESE STRICKLAND/IMAGN IMAGES

NEWTON, IA – Iowa Speedway, in its formative years, served as a launching pad for future NASCAR Cup Series champions Ryan Blaney, Chase Elliott, Brad Keselowski and Joey Logano.

Could Ty Gibbs be the next Iowa Speedway winner on that champions list?

Such a thought would have been unfathomable a year ago, when Gibbs was 16th in the points standings and wildly inconsistent. But Iowa Speedway fans, who sold out this venue for a third straight year since Cup racing came to the 7/8-mile "Fastest Short Track on the Planet," on Aug. 9 got to see a driver in Gibbs who looked poised to contend for NASCAR's top prize.

Gibbs staved off Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Christopher Bell in a heart-pounding final 19 laps, riding worn-out left-side tires to their limits to take the checkered flag in the Iowa Corn 350.

"(It's) week to week for me," said the 23-year-old grandson of his Hall of Fame team owner. "But, obviously want to win the title."

All the talk lately has been about Denny Hamlin's growing points lead and quest for his first, long-elusive Cup Series championship. The thought was Hamlin's biggest challenges might come from Tyler Reddick, who has led the points most of this season, or two-time series champ Blaney, who sat on the Iowa Corn 350 pole and was expected to win here.

But Gibbs, despite a slow pit stop that dropped him from the top five to 28th in the early going, methodically marched forward without panic on Sunday. He looked like a championship-level driver amid Iowa's summer heat, pocketing his second career win and 15th top-10 finish of the season.

The narrative of the hot-tempered grandson of Joe Gibbs has turned into a confident, consistent driver capable of competing with – and beating – NASCAR's biggest names. Over his last six races, Gibbs has accumulated 285 points – an average of 47 ½ per outing. (A race winner gets 55 plus any stage points.)

"My teammates have been a big help to me in my career, and obviously me to them," Gibbs said of his revival. He's finished 18th, 15th and 19th in his first three full-time seasons in Cup. "We all work hard to get our organization better and our program better, but my confidence doesn't waver. I'm not like a head case.

"Every single weekend is different, and there's always different things going on. If you're searching for confidence, you need to go do a therapy session or do something else."

Gibbs moved from fourth to second in points, jumping past Blaney and Reddick, with Iowa's 69-point boon. The points leader starts the 10-race Chase push with 2,100 points, second place starts with 2,075 and third starts with 2,065. Gibbs is currently 103 points back of Hamlin, but that gap could very well shrink to 25 after Aug. 29.

Going into Sunday's race at Iowa Speedway, Hamlin, 45, was the championship favorite at +140 odds, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Gibbs was the seventh choice, listed at +1400. That likely will change after his Iowa showing and as the realization grows that he is a legit championship threat.

"I think we're all pretty close," Gibbs said of the Toyotas, which now occupy five of the top six spots in points. "I think that the big thing (vs. Hamlin) is Denny is just such a great driver and has so much experience. I think that's the difference."

Runner-up Christopher Bell feels sour about four-tire pit stop

Christopher Bell and the number 2 continue to have a love-hate relationship.

Second-place finishes are incredibly valuable in NASCAR's reformatted points championship.

Bell, though, is probably sick of runner-up performances.

He has seven of them this season through 22 races, with zero firsts. Bell, incredibly, has four runner-up finishes in his last five races.

"We had control of the race and were leading laps," Bell said. "We had the pace to do it, had the track position to do it. Didn't do it."

So, what happened?

Bell crew chief Adam Stevens opted for four fresh tires on the final pit stop, allowing Gibbs to answer a few laps later with two. Gibbs used the strategy to retake the lead, then held off Bell's late charges.

Should Bell have taken two?

"Absolutely," the driver said. "We saw guys stay out all day (on zero or two fresh tires) and they were fine."

Bell, a 2018 and 2019 winner at Iowa Speedway in the former Xfinity Series, has always been a proponent of this track. He wasn't thrilled when the track did a partial repave in the corners ahead of the 2024 Cup race here.

"I'm excited about it. It was always my favorite racetrack before they did this," Bell said. "The repaves, everyone hates repaves. If they do this now, at least they have time for it to age. It should have been done two years ago."

An exhausting drive for points leader Denny Hamlin

Denny Hamlin exited his No. 11 Toyota Camry as if he'd just walked 100 miles through a desert, completely drained and dehydrated after a 350-lap drive with almost no brakes. A support-staff member quickly rushed to bring him ice, as he gingerly walked from his car to the pit-lane wall, where he sat soaked in sweat. Somehow, after starting 29th, the points leader brought his car home in fifth place amid blistering temperatures. The heat index surpassed 105 degrees during the race, according to USA's broadcast.

Hamlin is retiring after the 2027 season but joked that he might hang up the firesuit sooner if he had to suffer more days like this.

There were issues with brakes on several Toyotas leading up to the race (including for sixth-place Chase Briscoe), and Hamlin was complaining on the team radio about the issue early in the first stage. He wasn't able to drive as hard as he wanted to in the corners, genuinely not knowing if he could slow down.

"Just had to white-knuckle every lap, obviously not knowing where my car was going to land when I got into the corner," Hamlin said. "Obviously, you want to have brakes, and that was a crazy race to have to do it the whole time without it. But you've got to do what you've got to do. The team did an amazing job. I would take that day 100 out of 100 times."

Ryan Blaney settled for third, Josh Berry was fourth and Hamlin logged his series-best 13th top-five finish. No other driver has more than 10 top-fives.

Iowa Speedway was unkind to several star drivers

Tyler Reddick did a phone interview with The Des Moines Register a few weeks before the Iowa Corn 350. The driver who dominated the early part of NASCAR's schedule and was still No. 2 in points was aiming to reverse bad luck he's had in two Cup starts at Iowa.

"We haven't really had a clean race at Iowa yet," Reddick told the Register after finishing 22nd in 2024 and 19th in 2025. "We typically show up with good speed, though. We just haven't finished the race."

Well, things got worse for Reddick on lap 4 as his No. 45 Toyota got loose and crashed, taking out fellow Toyota Erik Jones in the process. Jones retired 35th and Reddick 36th (last).

While Reddick is locked into NASCAR's 10-race Chase format that allows the top 16 drivers to run for the championship following the Aug. 29 race at Daytona, he dropped to fourth in points as Blaney stayed in third.

Alex Palou closing in on IndyCar four-peat

Zion Brown
The Indianapolis Star | USA TODAY Network

Alex Palou won by more than four seconds Aug. 9 in the OnlyBulls Grand Prix of Portland in Oregon. PROVIDED BY INDYCAR SERIES

All it took was one moment for Alex Palou to seize complete control of IndyCar's Grand Prix of Portland. Palou started on the front row next to pole sitter Felix Rosenqvist, who led the first 31 laps of the race while Palou fell to third behind Marcus Ericsson.

But as Rosenqvist pitted after 31 laps, Palou's No. 10 Chip Ganassi Racing Honda stayed on the 12-turn, 1.964-mile Portland International Raceway road course for one more lap to make up some time. That decision allowed Palou to exit pit lane ahead of Rosenqvist's No. 60 Meyer Shank Racing Honda, as Palou led 60 of the 110 laps to win the race on Aug. 9 by over four seconds.

"He just drove better, to be honest," said Rosenqvist, who finished second. "Not a lot quicker, but he was a little bit quicker, especially on the blacks. That first stint, he outsmarted us, did one lap longer."

Palou has won his second race in a row, sixth of the season and third of his career in Portland. With five races left in the year, this victory puts Palou firmly in a position to win his fourth consecutive IndyCar championship and fifth in six years.

It seemed almost unfathomable that Palou could replicate his remarkable 2025 season, which saw him win eight races and finish 196 points ahead of Pato O'Ward, who was second in the championship. For most of this year, it appeared Palou – who clinched last year's championship in Portland before the final two races of the year – would be in a battle with David Malukas and Kyle Kirkwood until the end.

Two races ago, Palou's championship lead was down to 56 points (a win is worth 50 points). At that point, he told IndyStar, "Last year was magical. It was something else, something that I don't think I'll ever get to experience again myself." But after winning at Nashville Superspeedway on July 20 and doing so again on Sunday, Palou leads Kirkwood by 110 points, which is more than the 99-point gap he had over O'Ward through 13 races in 2025.

"I don't know what to say," Palou said after the race. "I really meant when I said that, that last year was very magical and it was very tough to repeat. Yeah, maybe we can even improve it. We'll try. We'll give our best."

As Palou went through his version of a rough stretch in June and July (two fifth-place finishes and a 17th), it seemed like there would be a chance for someone to stop his four-peat quest. Now, another championship feels inevitable.

"It would take an immense amount of misfortune by them to close out this championship and actually fight for it at the end," Kirkwood told Fox Sports. "And that's just to fight for it, right? They're doing everything right. That guy hasn't had bad luck, and they've done everything perfect for four or five years now. So hats off to them; they're doing a hell of a job. They're making our lives hell."

Every great driver has fallen victim to Palou's excellence throughout the 2020s. This is the second time Rosenqvist has held the second podium spot behind Palou this year. It happened to Kirkwood on May 31 in Detroit. While Malukas hasn't finished second to Palou in 2026, he was second to the champ in the 2025 Indianapolis 500. Beating Palou is a tall task, and even those who manage to do it occasionally don't make it a habit.

"I did my best today to make it interesting for the championship," said Rosenqvist, who is sixth in the standings. "I mean, he's just really good. Kind of been a topic of the season, right? We all get our shot to beat him. I had probably two, three this year. Yeah, he's just really tough to beat. He's got it figured out. I probably wouldn't put my money on anyone else."

Palou is in an elite car with an excellent crew around him, which certainly goes a long way. But what he's done to win 14 races over the last two seasons (with more potentially on the way) has cemented the 29-year-old as an all-timer in IndyCar. At the end of the day, someone has to execute in the cockpit, and Palou did so flawlessly on Sunday.

"Having Alex and his talent, there's nothing that replaces that," said Barry Wanser, Palou's strategist for the No. 10 car. "No matter how good the car is, you need the driver to be able to extract that performance out of the car."

Palou often hesitates to bathe in the praise thrown his way, but even he realizes that what he's doing isn't normal. The Spaniard thinks about how special this run is "every day."

"I just don't give it for granted," he said. "I think nobody in the team does. It's not like once a year that you think about it. It's like every single day when we talk about it. ... At some point it's going to end. This cannot go forever. I think that we're doing a great job of understanding how lucky we are."

Palou needs two wins in the final five races to match his mark of eight in 2025, which was tied for the fourth most in IndyCar history. The next two races are on brand-new street courses in Markham, Ontario, and Washington, DC, where Palou could be the favorite in both races. After a doubleheader on the Milwaukee Mile short oval (where Palou placed second last year), the season ends at Laguna Seca in a race he has won three of the last four years.

Whether Palou gets to eight (or more) wins again is yet to be seen, but he has hushed all talk of parity returning to IndyCar in 2026. Sunday served as another reminder that the champ is still the champ, and no one else is particularly close.

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Jalen Brunson and company ripped through the 2026 playoffs, reaching the NBA Finals with 11 consecutive victories that closed out the Hawks, included sweeps of the 76ers and Cavaliers. Then the Knicks polished off Victor Wembanyama and San Antonio in five games to hoist the Larry O'Brien Trophy.

"Garden Glory" is a 160-page hardcover book covering this entire season, from a 53-win regular season through the Finals showdown with San Antonio. The photos, the stories, the moments that made it real. Published by USA TODAY Sports. Printed on premium matte stock. Reserve your copy today.

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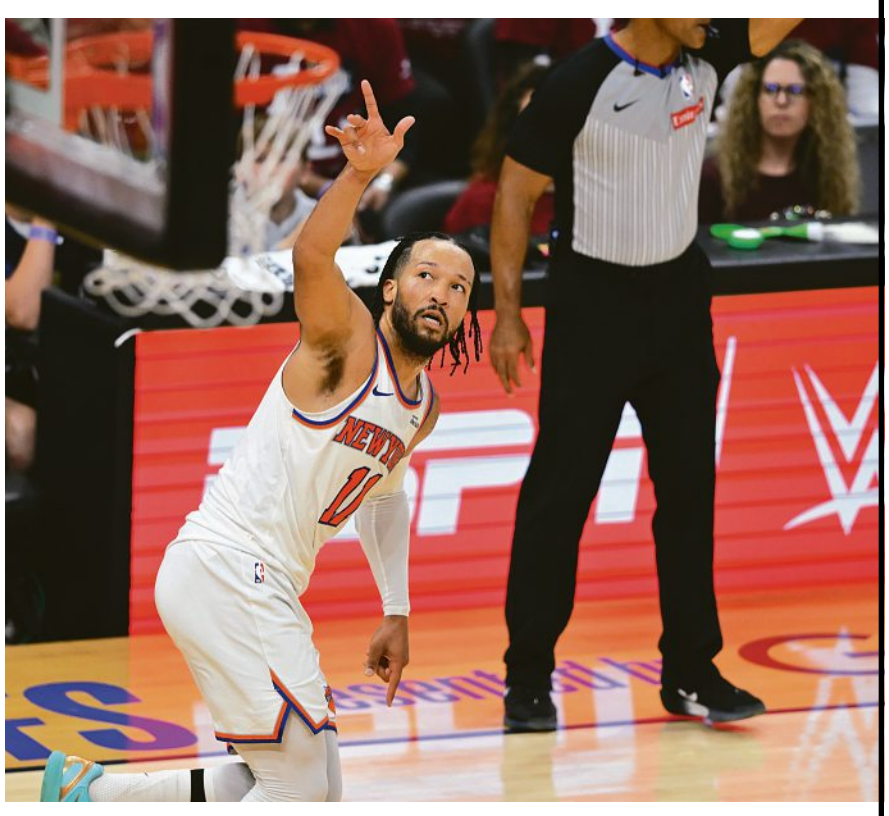


USA TODAY SPORTS

Why Perez Hilton's traumatic video stayed online so long

A 'moderator error' caused a delay in taking down the disturbing livestream. **Page 2D**

To Roth, 'Ice Cream Man' not your everyday horror film

Director/co-writer upfront with parents about casting kids as killers. **Page 4D**

LIFELINE

VATICAN MEDIA/CPPIPA/SIPA USA VIA REUTERS

MAKING WAVES
MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY

Matthew McConaughey recently met with Pope Leo XIV while attending his weekly audience during a service at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. McConaughey, joined by his wife, Camila Alves, was greeted by Pope Leo as the pontiff made his way through the church to speak with attendees. The Oscar-winning actor, dressed in a navy-blue suit, warmly shook the pope's hand and patted him on the shoulder while McConaughey gave some brief remarks, according to footage shared by The Associated Press.

IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY

Davis

Dancer **Allegra Kent** turns 89. Songwriter **Kenny Gamble**, 83. Author **Marilyn vos Savant**, 80. Entrepreneur **Steve Wozniak**, 76. Guitarist **Bob Mothersbaugh** (Devo), 74. Playwright **David Henry Hwang**, 69. Drummer **Richie Ramone** (Ramones), 69. Journalist **David Brooks**, 65. Actor **Viola Davis**, 61. Podcaster **Joe Rogan**, 59. Singer-songwriter **Ben Gibbard** (Death Cab for Cutie), 50. Actor **Chris Hemsworth**, 43.
– USA TODAY Network

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
More: www.sanctuaryworld.co

Aries (March 21-April 19). What's your strategy for success, Aries? For the next few weeks, your best bet may be reverse psychology!

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Your prone to reactive outbursts as Mars enters Cancer! Can you prove your point without resorting to personal attacks?

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Navigating financial indecision? Drifting desires are natural. What you want today, you'll forget about tomorrow.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Get ready to make an impact! Mars, planet of action and assertiveness, enters your sign today!

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Maintaining a low profile? As Mars enters Cancer, it's best to keep a plan on the DL, for now.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Expecting a friend to follow your lead? As Mars enters Cancer, collaboration is your surest path to a successful outcome.

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Play to your strengths! Mars enters Cancer and your career zone today. What is your professional objective?

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Two steps forward, one step back? Remember, that's still progress!

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Cutting a cord? It's difficult, but necessary. Let go or be dragged!

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Nipping a conflict in the bud? Rethink your approach. Cut off one head and another will appear as Mars enters Cancer!

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Feeling strong one minute, weak the next? Mars enters Cancer today, causing your energy levels to fluctuate.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Game for a good time? Mars' entrance to Cancer puts you in a fun-loving mood: a nice change of pace!

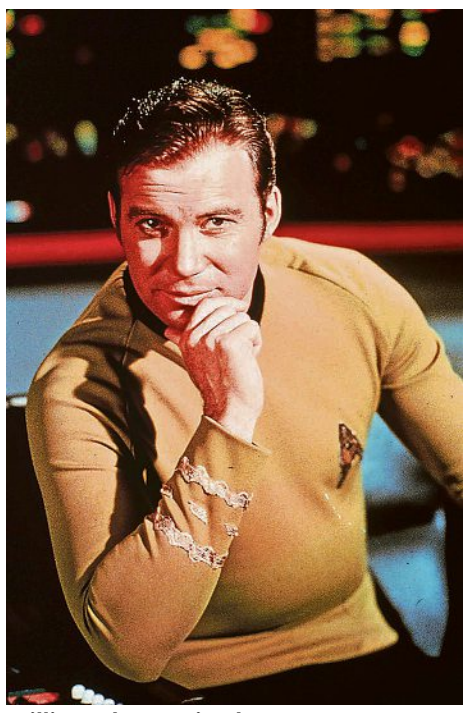
TELEVISION

William Shatner reflects on his role as Captain James T. Kirk as the original "Star Trek" series marks its 60th anniversary in September. Here, he is photographed at his offices in Studio City, California, on July 9. DAN MACMEDAN/USA TODAY

'Star Trek' star Shatner: 'I never thought about dying'

Bryan Alexander USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES – In 2016, William Shatner walked into his Studio City office for a USA TODAY photo shoot marking the 50th anniversary of "Star Trek" to find his desk overrun with Tribbles, the furry creatures from the beloved 1967 episode "The Trouble with Tribbles." The star forever known as Captain Kirk unceremoniously swept the carefully arranged props off his desk and proceeded with a Tribble-free photo shoot. • A decade later, sitting in the same office, Shatner, 95, insists he has no memory of the great Tribble desk purge. • "Was it done humorously?" Shatner asks earnestly, insisting he has no beef with the furiously breeding sci-fi creatures from the comedic episode. "Tribbles are good. Tribbles are a metaphor for uncontrolled activities of humanity."



William Shatner in character as James T. Kirk from the original TV program "Strar Trek." PROVIDED BY SCI-FI CHANNEL

Like Tribbles, the enduring fascination with TV's "Star Trek" seems to multiply without end.

As creator Gene Roddenberry's groundbreaking series approaches the 60th anniversary of its premiere on Sept. 8, 1966, Shatner remains fascinated by the amazing journey of the original show that lasted just three seasons (1966-1969) before NBC canceled it – yet turned the USS Enterprise crew, starting with Shatner's captain, into global icons.

"I think if you polled the entire human population and asked them, 'You know that mediocre and barely surviving television show that's on Friday nights at 10 o'clock with nobody watching?' " Shatner says. "I don't think you'd find anyone saying it would still be in our consciousness 60 years later."

But after Paramount sold the 79 episodes into syndication, "Star Trek" exploded in popularity, finding a devoted "Trekkie" audience that turned the series into a global entertainment empire that has spawned feature films and multiple generations of TV spin-offs (from "Star Trek: The Next Generation" to the current "Star Trek: Starfleet Academy").

See SHATNER, Page 2D

BOOKS

Why we can't stop arguing about 'Yesteryear' and what it says about us

Clare Mulroy
USA TODAY

No 2026 novel ignites debate like "Yesteryear" by Caro Claire Burke.

The tradwife satire is on late-night shows and in book clubs, plastered all over social media, in commuters' hands on public transit and sparking fiery comments on Goodreads. Some love it. Some hate it. No one can stop talking about it.

As someone who reads for a living, what fascinates me most aren't the books that get booklovers talking but the ones that get *everyone else* reading. Not every year has a book that so permeates the culture like "Yesteryear" and "Strangers" by Belle Burden. One is about a tradwife (traditional wife) influencer seemingly sent back in time to the period she has been cosplaying. In the other, a memoir, the author realizes she never really knew the man she married.

These two debuts are more alike than you realize. They're both polarizing – no one can agree on how to feel about them, which makes them endlessly ripe for book clubs. They're also both about the eruption of the "perfect life." What happens when it all goes belly-up? What if it was never perfect to

Two 2026 debut books have everyone fighting this year. What is it about "Yesteryear" and "Strangers" that have us fascinated?
ALAN NGUYEN, ADOBE STOCK/PROVIDED BY PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

See BOOKS, Page 2D

SOCIAL MEDIA

Why the traumatic Perez Hilton video stayed online

Moises Mendez II
USA TODAY

If you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental health crisis, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing or texting "988."

When Perez Hilton was seen self-harming in a TikTok Live Tuesday night, the platform's automated content moderation system "quickly flagged the livestream and alerted the American content moderation team," its spokesperson tells USA TODAY. But a " 'moderator error' caused a delay in taking down the disturbing livestream." Users on X have noticed that visuals from the incident still remain available on the platform.

Hilton

TikTok said the duration of the livestream was 15 minutes, not the 30 that has been reported elsewhere, and it also closed several subsequent streams by Hilton within 90 seconds. TikTok also noted that Hilton's account has been banned outright "due to Hilton breaching the social media platform's community guidelines."

But parts of the explicit livestream continue to circulate on X. Why does content like this stay available longer than the platforms intend? And how do they try to curb it?

How platforms try to moderate potentially harmful content

Each of the platforms has its own policies that do not permit the depiction of self-harm or suicide. "We have a zero-tolerance policy for ads that promote, depict, glorify, endorse, or document suicide, self-harm, or dangerous behaviors which may lead to these," TikTok's reads.

Though X did not respond to a request for comment and Meta declined to comment, Instagram has a policy with similar language, as does X and YouTube. (A spokesperson for YouTube pointed to its policy.) Screenshots from the graphic stream are still available on X as of the publication of this article.

X was bought by Elon Musk in 2022, who made large structural changes at the company – including firing a large portion of the content moderation team. Since then, the app has faced intense scrutiny of its moderation policies.

Content moderators at any social media company often are under immense strain when doing their job – not only do they frequently have to look at the most disturbing content, but they have an overwhelming amount of content to moderate. In an article written by the Harvard Business Review, the author found that moderators face a host of challenges: old interfaces that keep them from reviewing content as efficiently as they'd like to, poor pay, and the scrutiny they face while being evaluated (e.g., how many cases they went through and whether their supervisor agrees with their decisions on videos).

Jessica Maddox, an internet culture researcher and an associate media studies professor at the University of Georgia, says that content moderation is "like Whack-a-mole, because something pops up, you knock it down, and several other things pop up in its place."

She's sympathetic to the difficult nature of content moderation, but argues that the human error that occurred, keeping the livestream up for 15 minutes, is indicative of the fact that there should be an automatic removal process in place that is more immediate. If something was removed that wasn't deemed harmful, it should be restored, Maddox says, which is a version of the system that's in place. However, there have been multiple instances where this harmful content falls through the cracks.

The ability to find this graphic content has become mainstream, Maddox tells USA TODAY. "Social media was made for this violence. This type of violent content that we are exposed to on social media is not antithetical to social media's values; it is indicative of their values."

Take Charlie Kirk's assassination, for example. The video was widely shared on X, and if you search for it, videos from different angles still exist. These graphic videos used to live in darker corners of the internet that weren't as easily available as they are today.

Other violent livestreams

On the same day as Hilton's livestream, a Mexican influencer with over 600,000 TikTok followers was shot and killed during a livestream. Blurred-out and edited videos of the shooting are still currently available on the platform. In 2020, TikTok had two major instances of not removing graphic content in a timely manner. The first was a Brazilian influencer who livestreamed his suicide to an audience of over 200 people, The Intercept reported, and the video remained on the platform for over an hour and a half.

That same year, in September, a veteran named Ronnie McNutt livestreamed his suicide on Facebook and clips of the stream were uploaded to TikTok and other social media platforms. The platforms raced to take down the videos, but they kept being reuploaded.

One of McNutt's friends, Josh Steen, spoke to Heavy following the spread of the video and argued that Facebook did not do enough to take the video down. "Facebook could've stopped this and didn't," Steen told the publication. "Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social platforms could ban accounts, IPs, and stop the spread of this video. YouTube can flag you for using two seconds of a copyrighted song, but can't seem to filter out my friend ending his life. It does not make sense."

Maddox argues that all of the platforms fall short in this area, which is a detriment to community building, career-building, conversations, and other positive aspects of the internet.

"The algorithmic trend economy of social media has incentivized everyone participating in the viral conversation of the day to get clicks, likes, views, growing an audience, even if that's detrimental to people's mental health," Maddox says. In the absence of meaningful intervention from the platforms, the only people we can rely on are ourselves. She adds, "Do not seek out the video, because if you do, it incentivizes creators and users and platforms to keep pushing it, so I do think in this age the best and most radical thing we can do is deny something like this our attention."

Shatner

Continued from Page 1D

"The show gets canceled, I work diligently for six years, and I hear they're going to resurrect it because syndication was invented," Shatner says. "Everyone became enamored. 'Star Trek' was invented again."

Shatner says his joy was tempered by the lack of cash flowing with the new success.

"The unions had not discovered syndication fees," he says. "I received no money and became famously poor."

But the classically trained Canadian actor, famed for his distinctive dramatic line delivery, has remained rich in staying power. Along with starring in the police drama "T.J. Hooker" (1982-86) and earning Emmy Awards for his portrayal of attorney Denny Crane on "The Practice" and its spin-off, "Boston Legal" (2004-08), Shatner has remained relevant deep into his 90s.

At age 90, Shatner became the oldest person to fly to space as a passenger aboard Blue Origin's New Shepard in October 2021. After returning to Earth, he gave a tearful account of seeing the beauty of the endangered planet from space.

"I weep more so than ever," he says. "We're destroying the Earth. And this planet has such beauty and miracles. I'm passionate about what we've done to the planet."

Shatner battled cancer along with daughter Melanie

The actor says he was profoundly affected by his own fight for survival after being diagnosed with Stage 4 malignant melanoma in June 2023. His nearly fatal ordeal began when a seemingly harmless lump on his cheek continued to grow.

"My family doctor says, 'We've got to get this out.' And it was a Stage 4 malignancy. Ten years ago, I would have been dead," Shatner says. "Imagine going into your doctor's office and he says: 'Pack your bags. You've got five months to live.'"

The emotional weight of Shatner's own diagnosis was compounded by another devastating reality: His youngest daughter, Melanie Shatner Gretsch, now 62, had been battling Stage 4 breast cancer since 2022. Father and daughter suddenly found themselves fighting cancer at the same time.

"She, too, was told, 'Pack your bag – you've got five months at the most,' " Shatner says. "Can you imagine being told you've got five months to live? I don't know what your motivations are, or what you'd want to do first. But to be told you've only got five months to live? And part of that time you're going to be very ill. What are you going to do?

"So it was the two of us."

Though Shatner's melanoma spread to his lungs and brain, he says he is now cancer-free after surgery and two years of immunotherapy. Melanie too is cancer-free after chemotherapy, a double mastectomy, radiation and immunotherapy.

"We're cancer-free," says Shatner, who has launched the wellness podcast "No Time But Now" with his daughter. "We're totally in the clear."

Shatner was affected by cancer battle: 'I'd blundered through life'

Shatner, who drew criticism for missing the funeral of his longtime friend and costar Leonard Nimoy in February 2015, was profoundly affected by his brush with mortality from cancer.

"I never thought about dying. I wandered and blundered through life thinking, 'I'm not going to die,'" Shatner says. "It was like, 'Of course I'm going to get this job.' I'm going to drive up to a popular restaurant, and somebody pulls out of a space, and I park. It's like the universe was taking care of me on a minutiae scale, as seen by the incredible luck I've had in my life."

That worldview has "worn off like a callus," he says, leading to a deeper appreciation for "every moment" in his life, right down to the buttermilk chicken he had for dinner the evening before. But the fear is still there. When asked to name a passion that has heightened with age, Shatner cites staying alive.

"Not dying – that's always a good thing," he says. "I'm always anxious about that. I've thought about dying a lot."

The "Star Trek" legend insists he's not concerned about his legacy after he has left Earth for the final frontier.

"'Legacy' is not a word I recognize. Statues are torn down, buildings with people's names on them erode. The world is in constant change. The only legacy I recognize is doing good. I'm human, with my terrible faults, but I'm an admirer of good deeds."

Books

Continued from Page 1D

begin with?

And what does it say about us that we can't stop reading about it?

How 'Yesteryear' bottled the tradwife debate

Nearly two years before "Yesteryear" was published, Deadline reported Amazon MGM had won an auction to adapt the book into a film produced by and starring Anne Hathaway. In April, "Yesteryear" arrived into a cultural landscape fascinated with tradwife content – devoted wives who cook from scratch, sew clothes and raise their brood among nature.

Just three months later, "Yesteryear" sold its millionth copy. It's sales data that Knopf Executive Vice President and Publisher Jordan Pavlin calls "the stuff of legends."

"We knew from the moment we first read the manuscript that it had the potential to be a sensation. It was electrifying. We couldn't stop talking about it. It set the whole house on fire," Pavlin tells USA TODAY.

The success of this "decade-defining publication," Pavlin believes, is due to the "diabolically brilliant" nature of the novel. Its protagonist, Natalie Heller Mills, is a "flawless Christian woman" with millions of followers, to whom she advertises a humble homemaker life without disclosing how much of it is a lie.

The buzzy subject matter also helps. Natalie's rural farm life, sourdough making and gaggle of children draw comparisons with Hannah Neeleman, the influencer behind Ballerina Farm's more than 10 million followers. Neeleman said in an interview with Vulture that she was only surprised an "entertaining book about tradwives" didn't come sooner.

These traditional views of gender in marriage are nothing new, but influencers make them more visible, says Kristin Kobes Du Mez, a history professor at Calvin University in Michigan and the author of the upcoming book "Live, Laugh, Love: The Secret History of White Christian Women and the World They Made." Prominent conservatives are embracing tradwives as political strategy.

"Every woman is involved in this in one way or another, either participating in it, reacting to it, feeling judged by it. And so it's a very contested space and a very personal space, which means every woman has an opinion," Du Mez says. "That generates this conversation, which just generates more conversation, and that's great if you're trying to sell a book on the topic."

'Yesteryear' and 'Strangers' tackle the collapse of perfection

"Strangers" is a fundamentally different book, a memoir from a Vanderbilt heiress and attorney set in luxury Manhattan apartments and second homes in Martha's Vineyard rather than prairie farms. Burden writes about her husband's betrayal and leaving with a raw vulnerability.

But both runaway debuts confront "the distance between the ideal and the real," says Du Mez. Both touch on the false promises sold to women across the aisle: *This* is how you have the perfect life, the perfect marriage, the perfect family. Burden's life was perfect until it wasn't. Natalie's was never perfect to begin with.

She points to similar stories, like "Awake" by Jen Hatmaker. In this 2025 memoir, Christian blogger Hatmaker awoke in the middle of the night to her husband whispering into his phone, confessing his love for another woman. And more recently, influencer and nurse Jen Hamilton revealed to her nearly 5 million TikTok followers that her husband had been allegedly living a "double life."

The morbid curiosity and drama can make these stories feel like a train wreck we just can't look away from. But it's also a welcome deconstruction of the aspirational life. In "Yesteryear," we see deceit catch up with our protagonist. In "Strangers," we watch Burden discover it. Nothing is as it seems – not on social media, not in affluent country club circles and maybe not even to those we love. Burden's story inspired many women to rethink their shared finances.

"At a certain point, the whole thing breaks apart," Du Mez says. "Then there's this questioning: 'What lies have I been sold?' And I think in those moments, too, there's a need to go public with that, to share the story, to connect. If you go online with your story, you will immediately find other women who will support you, who will relate to you, and who will help you process in public."

Hallmark of a mega-bestseller: Can you argue at your book club?

However you feel after reading these buzzy books, there's no denying the fundamental aspect that has kept them on bestseller lists: We love to argue about them.

When my book club friends and I discussed "Strangers" months ago, we couldn't come to a consensus. Burden's story of divorce was horrific. But some felt she wasn't forthcoming enough about her privilege and financial security, the subject of a New Yorker investigation in May. Similarly, we're torn on "Yesteryear." Some loved the unlikable Natalie; others didn't feel she's believable. And don't even get us started on the twist.

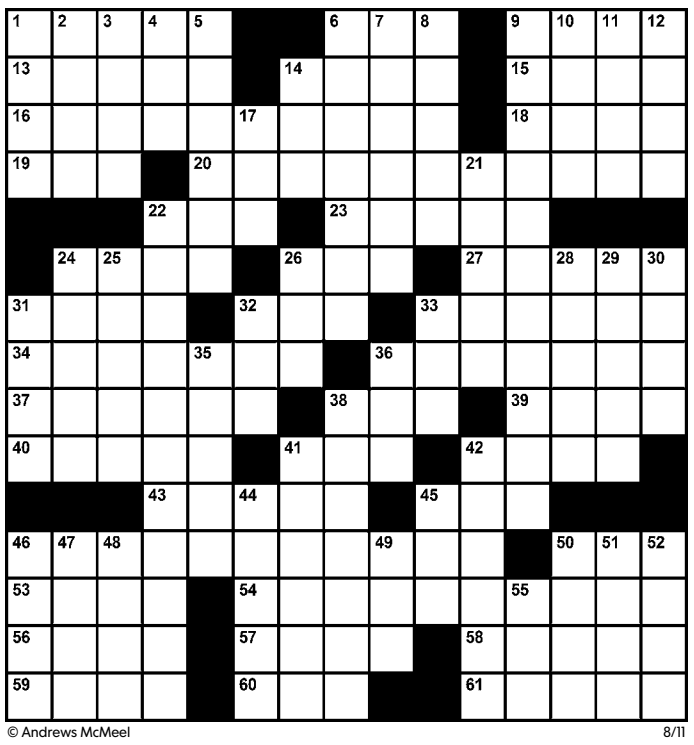
"Yesteryear" is also controversial for its portrayal of religion. Burke opted not to name a specific sect and was open about ceasing research after she started writing. Some Christian women, along with those who have left similar lifestyles, don't feel it accurately captures their experience. Others feel the novel was one of the first successful thrillers of recent cultural obsessions.

"I think that book is so successful in part because it's so messy," Du Mez says. "Everybody can come to it from their own place and then have opinions."

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amie Walker
BY Howard Neuthaler

WE'RE DONE HERE! (FREESTYLE)



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ACROSS
1 Cries from wolves
6 Undergarment that can be gender-affirming
9 "Sadly . . ."
13 Group for Ireland and Poland, for short
14 "Good grief!"
15 "___ get me started!"
16 "I've had enough!"
18 Wee bit
19 ATM code
20 Game that involves virtual calls?
22 Boxing decision (Abbr.)
23 Cuts into small cubes
24 Country with about 4 million alpacas
26 Perfect score for a diver
27 Brazilian ballroom dance
31 Teatro di Marcello city
32 Bro's sibling, perhaps
33 H.S. life skills class
34 Drink with balls that might get stuck in a straw
36 "Ah, got it"
37 Arctic fishing device
38 Route
39 Empty stretches on a resume
40 "I dunno" gesture
41 Horse food
42 "A rolling stone gathers no ___"
43 Sneaky tactics
45 Possesses
46 Wiped out in a dramatic way
50 Seasonal vaccine target
53 Grad
54 This is absolute mayhem!
56 What a cartoon light bulb might represent
57 Pointing Leonardo DiCaprio, e.g.
58 Tolerate
59 Rough voice feature
60 Not post-
61 Ski equipment

DOWN
1 URL opener
2 "Didn't see you there!"
3 Stop nursing gradually
4 "___ me know"
5 It's a numbers game
6 "Furthermore . . ."
7 Get under control
8 Like the god Huitzilopochtli
9 Casual farewell
10 Take a peek
11 Pay to play
12 Our sun, for one
14 Hair goo
17 Musician and activist Yoko ___
21 Money in Mexico
22 "X marks the spot" parchment, perhaps
24 Pup
25 Still-glowing coal
26 "Sister, Sister" performer Mowry
28 Flat-topped landforms
29 Sounds from R2-D2
30 Las Vegas WNBA team
31 A grand slam adds four of these to the batter's total
32 Do some stitching
33 "Psst!"
35 Prepare to advance a base on a fly out
36 "Hooray!"
38 "I'm innocent!"
41 Warming device
42 Zany
44 Losing streak
45 Half of a common pronoun pair
46 "You've got a point"
47 "Marriage Story" actor Alan
48 Billiards sticks
49 Simple top
50 "Epic ___!"
51 Miner's find
52 Finds a purpose for
55 First TV channel to begin transmitting by satellite

Monday's Answer

C	H	A	S	E	■	U	F	O	S	■	T	U	T	
R	U	S	T	S	■	P	L	U	T	O	■	A	N	O
A	L	I	A	S	■	T	O	T	E	M	■	M	O	N
B	U	F	F	A	L	O	W	I	N	G	■	B	R	A
■	■	■	F	Y	I	■	S	E	T	■	F	O	I	L
T	B	A	■	S	M	H	■	■	S	H	R	U	G	■
A	L	L	A	■	B	O	A	R	■	E	E	R	I	E
B	U	T	W	H	O	S	C	O	U	N	T	I	N	G
S	E	E	M	E	■	T	E	A	M	■	S	N	A	G
■	C	R	A	W	L	■	■	R	A	T	■	E	L	O
T	H	A	N	■	A	S	S	■	M	O	B	■	■	■
Y	E	T	■	B	U	T	T	D	I	A	L	I	N	G
L	E	I	■	A	G	R	E	E	■	S	A	D	I	E
E	S	O	■	T	H	I	E	F	■	T	R	O	L	L
R	E	N	■	■	S	P	R	Y	■	Y	E	S	E	S

8/10

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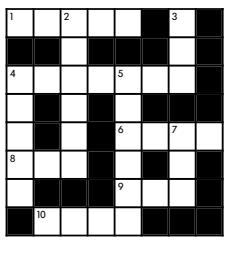
TXTPERT



8/11

Across
1. 32437
4. 6284489
6. 6423
8. 879
9. 759
10. 6328

Down
2. 478679
3. 749
4. 62789
5. 466378
7. 269

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Today's theme
Character traits

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

Yesterday's solution 8/10

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
Want solutions? **answers.usatoday.com**
Feedback: **feedback@usatoday.com**

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

	1	9		4	7		5	
		5	6		3			
		7		2			3	
			4	3		1		9
1								5
4		2		6	5			
	5			1		7		
			3		6	5		
	8		7	5		4	6	

8/11 DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

6		4	2	3	
			5		
			1	2	3
3	2	1			
		5			
	3	2	4		6

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

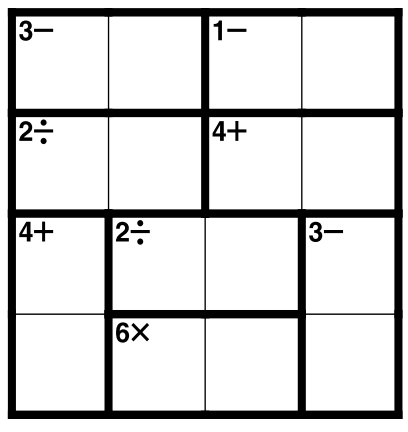
Monday's Answers

3	7	6	2	8	5	4	9	1
4	1	5	3	6	9	8	7	2
2	8	9	1	4	7	3	5	6
1	4	3	6	9	2	5	8	7
8	9	2	5	7	4	6	1	3
5	6	7	8	3	1	9	2	4
7	5	8	4	2	6	1	3	9
6	2	1	9	5	3	7	4	8
9	3	4	7	1	8	2	6	5

5	4	3	6	1	2
2	6	1	5	3	4
3	2	4	1	6	5
1	5	6	2	4	3
6	3	2	4	5	1
4	1	5	3	2	6

8/10

KENKEN



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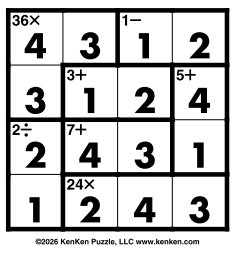
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



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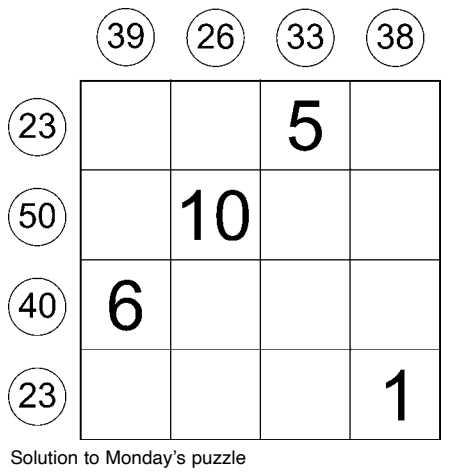
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: **EXPERT**



Solution to Monday's puzzle

12	5	3	10
11	4	9	8
14	7	2	1
15	6	16	13

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 8/11

Find and Circle:
Seven bodies of water ☑□□□□□□
Five five-letter mammals □□□□□
Three school subjects □□□
Mythical bird □
One-twelfth of a foot □

Monday's answer: CHEESE YOGURT BUTTER CREAM MILK / AUGUST MARCH APRIL JUNE / BUGLE FLUTE PIANO CELLO / REVERSE NEUTRAL DRIVE / BISON

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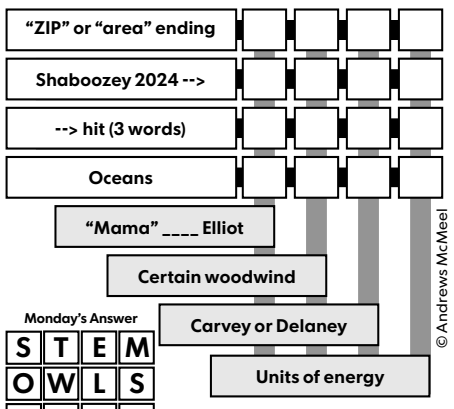
QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 8/11



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Monday's Answer

S	T	E	M
O	W	L	S
L	I	M	B
E	G	O	S

8/10

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 8/11

1. **WORKPLACE**
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____ **GUN**

Clues:
1. Cubicle courtship
2. French or Italian, e.g.
3. Linguistic hurdle
4. Landform near the coast
5. Archipelago
6. Constant puffing habit
7. Incriminating evidence

Monday's Answer

NO	GOOD
GOOD	QUESTION
QUESTION	AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY	FIGURE
FIGURE	OUT
OUT	WEST
WEST	GERMANY

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

© Andrews McMeel

BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Tangy
5 Forest clearing
10 Complain
14 Gothic arch
15 "Thinker" sculptor
16 Celebes ox
17 College VIP
18 Century plant
19 Headliner
20 Decree
22 Painkiller
24 Midday
26 End-of-week exclamation
27 Tell
29 Hollered
33 Qty. of eggs
34 Baseball great Hank —
37 "Lorna —"
38 Cultural fields
40 By way of
41 Broad
42 Precipitous
44 Brownies
47 Alert color
48 Bustling
50 Loved a lot
52 "... where angels — to tread"
54 Hawaiian feast
55 Loathed
59 Positive account entry
63 Equal
64 Town in Florida
66 Kismet
67 "On the double!"
68 French painter
69 — Bator
70 Vow
71 Outpouring
72 Musical quality of speech

DOWN
1 "I had nothing — — with that!"
2 Golden- —
3 Interpret
4 Leaseholder
5 Crunchy natural cereal
6 Fireplace fodder
7 Not know from —
8 Chunk of turf
9 Pep
10 Money movement (2 wds.)
11 Against
12 Horse's color
13 Trim
21 Jot
23 Parti-colored
25 Effrontery
27 Rich cake
28 Montezuma, for one
30 French river
31 Stopped
32 Ownership document
33 Short race
35 Lubricate
36 Warship-related
39 Start out (2 wds.)
43 Jetty
45 Instruct
46 Fly high
49 Ricochets
51 Feeling regret
53 Summary, for short
55 Lhasa —
56 Phi — Kappa
57 Warmth
58 Actor — Carvey
60 Artist Salvador —
61 Type style (Abbr.)
62 Pavilion
65 — bygones be bygones

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

D	A	S	H	■	■	E	R	A	S	■	B	O	B	S
O	B	E	Y	■	E	X	I	L	E	■	E	M	I	T
C	U	R	D	■	L	A	G	E	R	■	R	I	T	E
■	T	A	R	M	A	C	■	■	M	A	S	T	E	R
■	■	■	A	U	N	T	■	M	O	R	E	■	■	■
S	L	A	N	T	■	■	C	E	N	T	R	A	L	■
P	A	S	T	E	S	■	A	S	I	■	K	N	O	B
A	C	T	■	■	T	O	P	A	Z	■	■	G	O	O
R	E	E	D	■	I	V	E	■	E	G	R	E	S	S
■	D	R	E	A	M	E	R	■	■	R	U	L	E	S
■	■	■	S	P	U	R	■	F	O	A	M	■	■	■
V	E	S	S	E	L	■	■	L	U	M	B	E	R	■
I	D	L	E	■	A	D	I	O	S	■	L	U	A	U
A	G	A	R	■	N	U	R	S	E	■	E	R	I	N
L	E	T	T	■	T	E	A	S	■	■	D	O	D	O

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7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 earning points (7)	_____
2 just blah (5)	_____
3 thrive (8)	_____
4 treat the pool (10)	_____
5 waving about (11)	_____
6 gives the boot (5)	_____
7 the "talk" of Rio (10)	_____

OUS	FL	SCO	CH	BA
SIC	ISH	OUR	IN	AND
ISH	TS	ATE	RING	TUGU
POR	ESE	ING	BR	LOR

Monday's Answers: 1. READER 2. REPLACEMENT 3. GENTLENESS 4. LISTENED 5. INHERIT 6. ALEUTIANS 7. CALCULATORS 8/11

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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SRCOS

FIEKN

GEOIBO

TLENGE

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

BEAUTIFUL VIEWS
I could look at that every day.
I need a picture of that view.
WHEN THEY TOURED THE AVAILABLE LOTS IN THE NEW DEVELOPMENT, THEY WERE ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

"_____-_____"

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: MOLDY SCARF FLURRY GALLON
Answer: With his fresh bread in the oven, the baker had time to — LOAF AROUND

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DON'T QUOTE ME®

Comedian Jonathan Winters talks about his career.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
AHEAD IT SO SUCCESS WAIT WENT

"I COULDN'T ___ FOR _____, ___ I ___ _____ WITHOUT ___."

8/11

Monday's Answer: "Although always prepared for martyrdom, I preferred that it should be postponed." - Winston Churchill

© WIGGLES 3D GAMES

MOVIES

Killer kids? Roth talks horror flick 'Ice Cream Man'

Ralphie Aversa
USA TODAY

Ari Millen stars in Eli Roth's film "Ice Cream Man" as a sweet treat deliverer who brings more than a sugar rush to town.
VALERIE FLORES/PROVIDED BY THE HORROR SECTION

NEW YORK – If you try to joke with director Eli Roth that his latest slasher film, "Ice Cream Man" (in theaters Aug. 7), ruins the summer ritual for kids and adults, he'll beat you to the punchline.

"I've ruined a lot of things," Roth, 54, tells USA TODAY. "I've ruined backpacking ['Hostel'], I've ruined going to a cabin ['Cabin Fever'], I've ruined Thanksgiving. Why not?"

The holiday that features turkey and pumpkin pie served as the title for his 2023 slasher.

Roth directed, produced, co-wrote and plays a role in "Ice Cream Man," in which that aforementioned sweet treat deliverer (Ari Millen) dishes out ice cream to the local kids. The byproduct of eating the dessert is a little more horrifying than your typical childhood sugar rush.

The director started to ideate the premise of the film about 20 years ago.

"We could have got it at the market, but somehow (the ice cream) always tasted better coming off a truck," he says. "And then in the '80s, there were some sketchy ice cream dudes. And I saw all the kids there and I thought, 'What if the ice cream just made them go crazy and they killed all the adults?' "

That brings up a key difference between this movie and Roth's past horror films: He needed to cast a number of children to play the slashers.

"I was really upfront with the parents," the director says. "I explained exactly what we were going to do and I talked about why I wanted to make this movie. And they were like: 'Yeah, great. No problem.' "

Roth also reveals that the children who landed roles in the movie were "unaffected" by the premise to the point where many of the props became toys.

"The kids are playing jump rope with intestines and tetherball with a head," Roth remembers. "It's like Christmas morning for them. When we put the kids in the makeup, there was no direction required."

Set rules required that parents "have visual eye contact with their children at all times," he says.

"They understand Halloween," Roth adds. "The parents actually said: 'This is great. So when we watch a scary movie, they'll know how it was done.' "

Eli Roth merges horror and hip-hop with 'Ice Cream Man'

Roth will release "Ice Cream Man" through The Horror Section, an independent film company he founded. The movie is also produced through a partnership with Mass Appeal, the entertainment company founded by Nas.

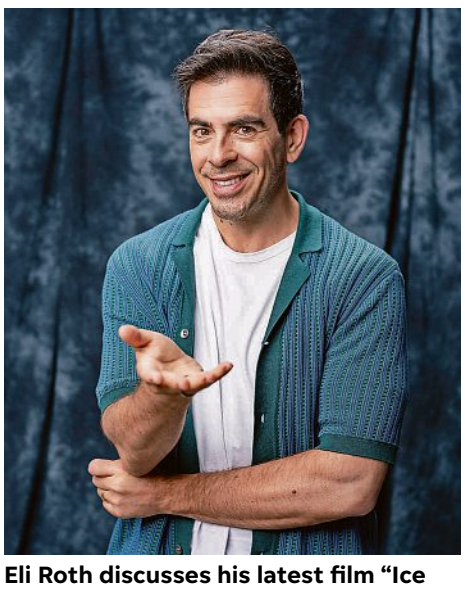
But he's not the only hip-hop legend involved in Roth's latest release.

Snoop Dogg contributed "Ice Cream Song" to the film's closing credits. He also assisted in the movie's score. Roth says the rapper, born Calvin Broadus Jr., texted him the original song after a quick conversation the two had about the film.

This won't be their last collaboration: Roth and Snoop are set to coproduce a horror flick with the NSFW title "Don't Go in That House, Bitch!" The director says their partnership comes naturally because of their mutual love for hip-hop and horror.

"It was like a joke fake trailer," Roth says of the origins of "Don't Go." When Snoop saw it, he asked to play the neighbor who warns people about the haunted home. Roth also pulled the rapper in as a producer.

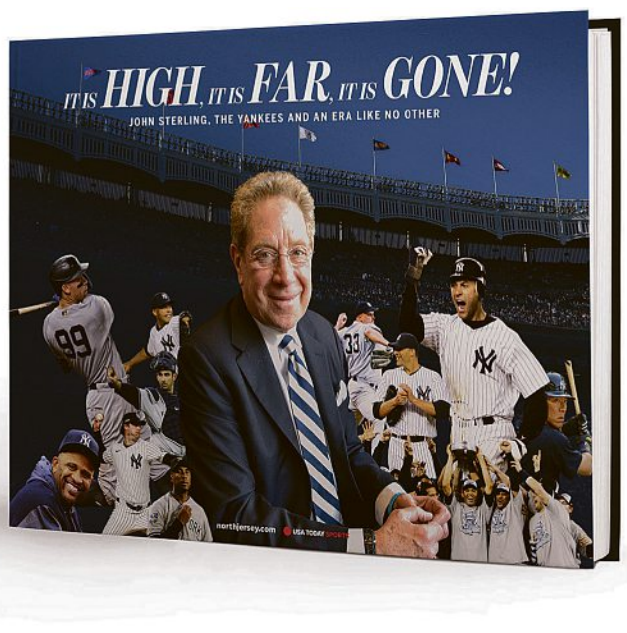
"We're going to make 'Don't Go in That House, Bitch!' because we just find it funny. I'm still internally a perpetual 15-year-old. I get that excited about horror movies."



Eli Roth discusses his latest film "Ice Cream Man." NATHANIAL GARY/USA TODAY

The career of a legend
MEMORIALIZED

The storied career of John Sterling in a hardcover collector's book



cover not final

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For 36 years, John Sterling called every single Yankees game. Every pitch, every hit, every walk-off ... 5,060 consecutive broadcasts without missing one. His home run calls were woven into New York baseball. "It is high, it is far, it is gone!" was the sound of summer in the Bronx. But this collectible book is about more than the man behind the mic. This commemorative coffee-table book from NorthJersey.com and USA TODAY Sports captures the greatest moments of the Sterling Era: the championships, the legends, the unforgettable plays. It follows Sterling's career and the Yankees era he called through photography, stories and behind-the-scenes moments. It's all here. Preorder your copy today.

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NATION&WORLD EXTRA

A man walks past the rubble of a collapsed building after an earthquake in Pereira, Colombia, on Aug. 10. A powerful earthquake rocked Colombia and neighboring Latin American countries with medical teams rushing to help victims after buildings were damaged or collapsed in several cities. JAIME SALDARRIAGA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

'THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE TRAPPED'

More than 100 killed after the strongest quake this century hits western Colombia

Luis Jaime Acosta, Julia Symmes Cobb and Nelson Bocanegra
REUTERS

BOGOTA, Colombia – At least 111 people were killed after a powerful earthquake struck western Colombia on Aug. 10, toppling buildings across several cities, damaging hospitals and infrastructure and trapping people beneath the rubble in what authorities called the country's strongest earthquake of the century.

The quake struck just days after Abelardo De La Espriella was sworn in as president, thrusting the new administration into its first major crisis, with memories still fresh of devastating twin earthquakes in neighboring Venezuela in June.

"The national government has all of its capabilities deployed to protect lives, assist affected communities and deliver aid wherever it is needed," he said in a national address around 1 p.m. local time, upon declaring a national state of emergency.

"The first priority is rescuing the people trapped under the rubble."

De La Espriella said preliminary reports indicated 111 dead and 87 injured, along with dozens of collapsed buildings and damaged homes.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the 7.4 magnitude quake struck at a depth of 66 miles. Colombia's geological service said it was the strongest earthquake recorded in the country in the 21st century.

Reports from Choco, near the epicenter, were slowed by communications outages, with some areas still lacking cellphone service hours after the earthquake. Gov. Nubia Carolina Cordoba said 12 people had been killed and 84 injured in the largely rural area.

The heaviest casualties appeared concentrated in Risaralda, part of Colombia's coffee-growing region. Pereira, the department's capital, suffered extensive damage, with rescue workers continuing to search collapsed buildings for survivors.

A four-story building crumbled in Pereira during the quake, according to Reuters-verified video, while footage from Manizales showed one of the side towers of the city's landmark neo-Gothic cathedral collapsing and scattering debris onto nearby streets.

Reuters footage showed rescue workers, police and volunteers shoveling debris by hand and loading rubble into trucks as they searched for survivors trapped beneath collapsed buildings. Other footage showed damage to residential towers and emergency-service facilities, with debris crashing onto ambulances parked below.

Mauricio Andrade, a firefighter in Cali, said his team had rescued two women and two children from a collapsed building.

As he spoke to Reuters, his team was preparing to rescue more people from the rubble.

See COLOMBIA, Page 4NN

A woman reacts as residents dig through the debris of collapsed buildings after an earthquake in Cali, Colombia, Aug. 10.
CHRISTIAN ESCOBARMORA/REUTERS

People remove rubble from a collapsed building after an earthquake in Cali, Colombia, on Aug. 10. A magnitude 7.4 earthquake killed at least 111 people and left an unknown number of people buried under rubble.
JOAQUIN SARMIENTO/ AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Hopes for Strait of Hormuz deal fade

Trump now demands Iranian reparations

Steve Holland and Jacob Bogage
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump on Aug. 10 responded to Iran's conditions for a peace deal with his own demands that Iran pay compensation for people killed in wars, attacks and protests, in a rhetorical escalation likely to complicate efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump's proposal, which had not been raised before, was a response to Tehran's demands for compensation and an end to sanctions. The Iranian demands were largely in line with the terms of a preliminary peace deal signed in June, which has since broken down.

Since the war began in February, Trump has repeatedly oscillated between threats of escalation and claims that a peace deal is imminent.

"We're going to ask for money for the damage they've done over a 50-year period," Trump said at the White House, saying payments would cover deaths among both civilian demonstrators and U.S. forces in the region.

"So if there's damages to be paid, I think Iran should pay those damages," Trump said. Oil prices settled 5% higher on Aug. 10 after the demands dimmed prospects for a deal to reopen the strait.

Referring to Tehran's crackdown on demonstrations in late 2025 and 2026, Trump said Iran had killed some 52,000 protesters as of six weeks ago.

While some Iranian opposition and exile groups have claimed tens of thousands killed, the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency in February reported around 7,000 deaths including 6,500 protesters.

Trump encouraged protesters to overthrow the Iranian government when the war began with U.S. and Israeli airstrikes in February. Rights groups say the Iranian government has continued to crack down on opponents since then.

See IRAN, Page 4NN

Iran's Supreme National Security Council said the Strait of Hormuz would not reopen until the United States "corrects its behavior," demanding an end to the war on Iran.
ALI SAEEDI/GETTY IMAGES

Frustrations over agriculture heat up House race

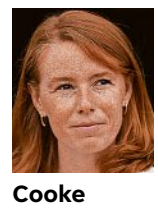
President Donald Trump has already traveled to Wisconsin this summer to stump for Rep. Derrick Van Orden, R-Wisconsin, in what's expected to be a tight race that could turn on how Trump's policies have affected rural voters.
NATHAN HOWARD/REUTERS

Challenger Cooke has outraised incumbent

Renee Hickman
REUTERS

EAU CLAIRE, WI – When she's not trekking across Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District to meet voters, Democratic congressional challenger Rebecca Cooke is still on her feet, waiting tables at two restaurants around Eau Claire, a city of about 73,000 people surrounded by rolling farmland.

"When you're serving people at a restaurant, it's almost like you're knocking doors every time you're waiting a table," said Cooke, who is trying to flip one of a shrinking number of highly competitive seats in the U.S. House of Representatives in November's midterm elections that could end Republican control of Congress.



Cooke

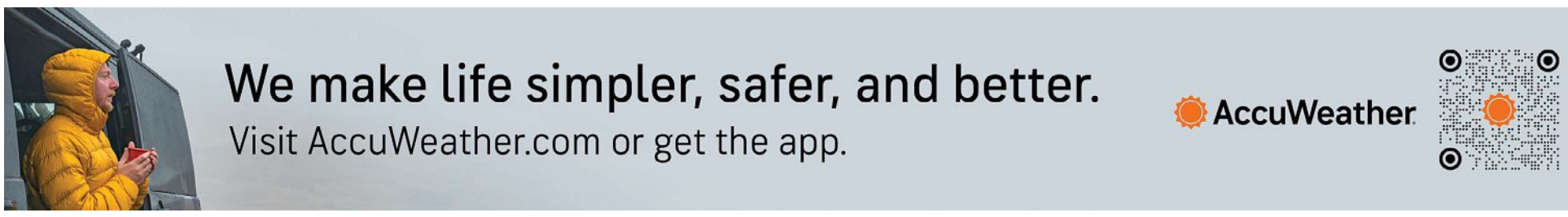
Cooke doesn't get into deep political conversations as she takes orders, she said, but customers do sometimes recognize her and tell her about issues they care about, occasionally writing notes of support on receipts. She keeps the best ones in a folder on her phone.

Each of those tableside moments could be a difference-maker for Cooke, 38, the Democratic frontrunner in the Aug. 11 primary. If victorious, she will head to a rematch with Republican incumbent Derrick Van Orden, who was elected in 2022, in what's expected to be a tight race that could turn on how President Donald Trump's policies have affected rural voters.

Trump has already traveled to Wisconsin this summer to stump for Van Orden, 56, in an appearance framed by tractors and bales of hay. Van Orden was elected in 2022 following the retirement of moderate Democrat Ron Kind.

However, with the reverberations of Trump's policies – the U.S. war with Iran, trade disputes with China, and steep cuts to healthcare and food aid – Democrats see an opportunity for

See HOUSE, Page 4NN

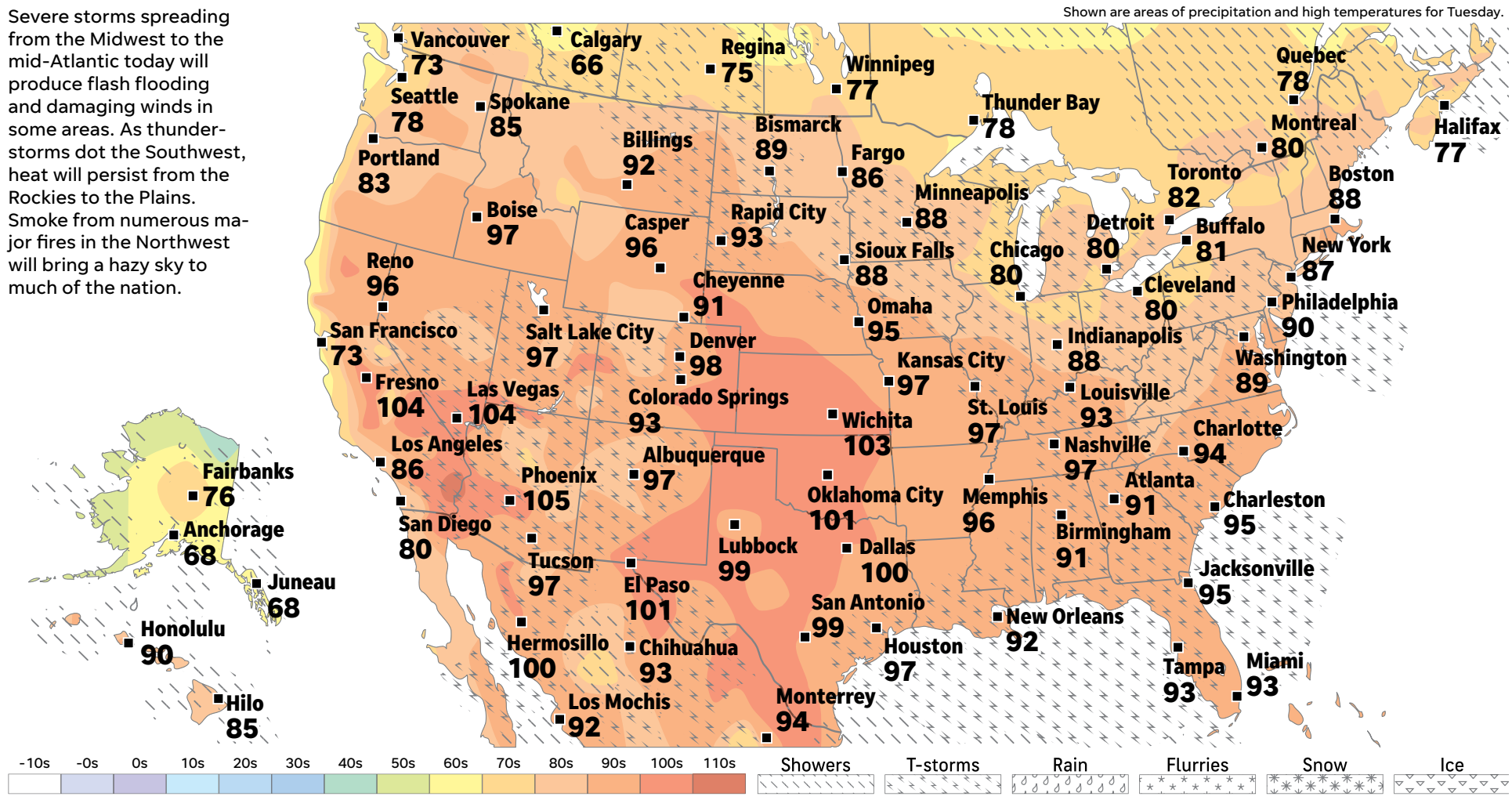


NATIONAL SUMMARY

Severe storms spreading from the Midwest to the mid-Atlantic today will produce flash flooding and damaging winds in some areas. As thunderstorms dot the Southwest, heat will persist from the Rockies to the Plains. Smoke from numerous major fires in the Northwest will bring a hazy sky to much of the nation.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Tuesday.



MONDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High:	**119** at Death Valley, CA
Low:	**35** at Stanley, ID
Precip:	**2.55"** at Grand Rapids, MI

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High:	**118** at Nasiriya, Iraq
Low:	**4** at Perito Moreno, Argentina
Precip:	**5.12"** at Baguio, Philippines

TODAY IN HISTORY

After moving inland at the Texas coast the day before, Hurricane Allen weakened to a tropical depression on Aug. 11, 1980. It left a half a million people homeless and caused over $1 billion in damage.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: Who was responsible for the phrase dog days of summer?

A: The Romans

NATIONAL CITIES TUESDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
● Aberdeen, SD	85/63/pc	54
Abilene, TX	101/77/s	30
● Accomac, VA	88/71/t	65
Adrian, MI	79/64/t	75
● Akron, OH	80/65/t	25
Alamogordo, NM	103/74/t	59
● Alexandria, VA	89/74/t	60
● Alliance, OH	78/66/t	25
Amarillo, TX	100/73/s	25
● Ames, IA	89/70/t	75
● Anderson, SC	96/74/t	39
● Appleton, WI	84/67/t	75
● Asheville, NC	88/69/t	51
● Ashland, OH	78/66/t	25
● Athens, GA	94/73/t	35
● Augusta, GA	96/73/t	34
Austin, TX	100/79/pc	75
Bartlesville, OK	103/79/s	55
Battle Creek, MI	77/64/t	75
● Bedford, IN	88/70/t	46
Binghamton, NY	78/59/pc	50
● Bluffton, SC	96/77/t	31
Bremerton, WA	78/55/s	28
Brockton, MA	89/63/pc	55
Brownwood, TX	100/75/s	33
● Burlington, IA	88/72/t	37
● Burlington, NC	92/71/t	51
Burlington, VT	82/60/pc	20
● Cambridge, OH	81/68/t	35
Camdenton, MO	98/77/s	39
Canandaigua, NY	81/59/pc	50
● Canton, OH	78/67/t	25
Carlsbad, NM	104/75/s	65
● Chambersburg, PA	83/68/t	66
● Cherry Hill, NJ	89/71/t	60
● Cincinnati, OH	86/69/t	65
Clarksville, TN	96/75/t	50
Coldwater, MI	76/64/t	75
● Columbus, OH	82/69/t	39
Corning, NY	81/56/t	38
Corpus Christi, TX	96/79/s	25
Daytona Beach, FL	92/75/t	25
Deming, NM	100/70/t	49
DeRidder, LA	93/75/t	44
● Des Moines, IA	92/72/t	75
Detroit, MI	80/65/t	75
● Devils Lake, ND	81/58/pc	69
Dover, NH	86/60/pc	25
El Paso, TX	101/77/s	75
Elmira, NY	81/59/t	41
● Erie, PA	79/64/t	51
Eugene, OR	87/57/s	25
● Evansville, IN	95/75/t	75
Fall River, MA	89/64/pc	55
● Farmington, NM	98/67/t	67
● Fayetteville, NC	97/75/t	51
● Fond du Lac, WI	81/63/t	75
Fort Myers, FL	94/78/t	25
Fort Smith, AR	101/80/pc	40
Framingham, MA	88/62/pc	55
● Freeport, IL	79/66/t	75
● Fremont, OH	79/66/t	62
● Fort Collins, CO	94/66/t	75
● Gadsden, AL	90/71/t	26
Gainesville, FL	94/75/t	25
● Galesburg, IL	86/71/t	75
● Gastonia, NC	96/70/t	51
Glen Rose, TX	102/77/s	33
Gonzales, LA	94/76/t	53
Great Falls, MT	85/53/pc	103
● Green Bay, WI	81/62/t	75
● Greenville, SC	93/71/t	39
Hackensack, NJ	90/71/t	60
● Hagerstown, MD	86/70/t	66
● Hattiesburg, MS	98/76/t	20
● Henderson, KY	94/73/t	75
● Hendersonville, NC	89/66/t	51
Herkimer, NY	82/58/pc	35
Hillsdale, MI	77/63/t	75
Holland, MI	79/66/t	75
Hornell, NY	81/58/t	35
Houma, LA	90/76/t	33
Howell, MI	81/65/t	75
Hutchinson, KS	105/79/pc	44
Hyannis, MA	87/65/pc	50
● Indianapolis, IN	88/71/t	25
● Iowa City, IA	87/71/t	40
Ithaca, NY	79/56/pc	50
Jackson, MS	97/76/pc	47
Jackson, TN	94/75/pc	37
Jacksonville, FL	95/75/t	25
● Jacksonville, NC	95/77/pc	45
● Kent, OH	79/65/t	75
● Kewanee, IL	84/68/t	75
● Keyser, WV	84/67/t	66
● Kinston, NC	96/73/pc	45
● Knoxville, TN	91/73/t	50
● Lafayette, IN	83/69/t	31
Lafayette, LA	92/77/t	39
Lakeland, FL	95/75/t	25
Lansing, MI	79/64/t	75
Las Cruces, NM	99/69/t	54
● Lebanon, PA	84/67/t	54
Leesburg, FL	95/76/t	25
Levittown, PA	89/70/t	60
● Lincoln, IL	91/68/t	75
● Louisville, KY	93/74/t	75
Lubbock, TX	99/75/s	25
● Manitowoc, WI	76/64/t	75
● Mansfield, OH	79/65/t	47
● Marshall, NC	87/67/t	51
● Marshfield, WI	83/61/t	75
● Massillon, OH	79/67/t	25
● McLean, VA	86/72/t	60
Melbourne, FL	92/76/s	25
Memphis, TN	96/79/pc	47
Middletown, NY	85/60/t	45
Milford, MA	86/62/pc	55
● Milwaukee, WI	77/68/t	75
Monroe, MI	80/65/t	75
Monroe, LA	98/77/pc	50
● Montgomery, AL	93/75/t	27
● Muncie, IN	82/69/t	36
Murfreesboro, TN	93/72/t	50
● Naples, FL	93/79/t	25
Nashville, TN	97/77/t	50
Neptune, NJ	88/74/t	65
New Bedford, MA	88/62/pc	55
● New Bern, NC	95/75/pc	45
● New Philadelphia, OH	78/66/t	25
● Newark, OH	79/68/t	39
Newton, NJ	85/61/t	60
New York, NY	87/72/t	60
Norwich, CT	87/62/pc	54
Ocala, FL	93/74/t	25
Oklahoma City, OK	101/76/s	55
Opelousas, LA	93/74/t	39
● Oshkosh, WI	81/65/t	75
Palm Beach, FL	93/81/pc	25
Palm Springs, CA	106/84/t	80
Panama City, FL	90/80/t	25
● Pekin, IL	87/69/t	75
Pensacola, FL	90/78/t	25
● Peoria, IL	88/73/t	75
● Petersburg, VA	93/71/s	56
● Phoenix, AZ	105/85/t	112
Port Huron, MI	80/59/t	58
Portsmouth, NH	87/62/pc	25
Poughkeepsie, NY	85/62/pc	45
Providence, RI	88/68/pc	58
Pueblo, CO	101/68/pc	75
Quincy, MA	90/67/pc	55
Redding, CA	101/66/s	184
Reno, NV	96/65/s	75
● Ravenna, OH	79/65/t	75
● Richmond, IN	84/68/t	60
Rochester, NY	80/60/pc	32
● Rockford, IL	83/69/t	75
Ruidoso, NM	89/63/t	65
Salem, OR	85/59/s	25
Salina, KS	105/79/pc	39
Salinas, CA	70/60/pc	25
● Salisbury, MD	90/72/t	71
San Angelo, TX	98/74/s	31
Sarasota, FL	93/78/t	25
● Savannah, GA	95/76/t	31
● Sheboygan, WI	76/64/t	75
● Shelby, NC	94/69/t	51
Sherman, TX	100/79/s	36
Shreveport, LA	97/77/pc	56
Silver City, NM	93/66/t	54
● Sioux Falls, SD	88/67/t	43
● Somerset, PA	74/65/t	52
Somerville, NJ	88/67/t	60
● South Bend, IN	78/67/t	75
● Spartanburg, SC	93/70/t	39
● Springfield, IL	91/73/t	75
Springfield, MO	97/77/s	44
St. Augustine, FL	92/77/t	25
● St. Cloud, MN	86/63/t	50
● St. George, UT	99/77/t	75
● Staunton, VA	86/66/t	39
● Stevens Point, WI	84/63/t	75
Stockton, CA	97/62/s	45
Stroudsburg, PA	86/61/t	60
Stuart, FL	93/77/s	25
Sturgis, MI	76/66/t	75
Tallahassee, FL	94/75/t	25
Thibodaux, LA	91/76/t	33
Topeka, KS	98/79/s	46
Tuscaloosa, AL	93/76/t	44
Utica, NY	81/57/pc	28
Ventura, CA	75/66/pc	52
Victorville, CA	100/67/pc	97
● Vineland, NJ	91/70/t	60
Visalia, CA	103/68/s	58
● Washington, DC	89/74/t	60
● Watertown, SD	83/64/t	71
● Wausau, WI	85/63/t	75
● Waynesboro, PA	83/68/t	66
White Plains, NY	86/66/t	56
Wichita Falls, TX	103/77/s	55
● Wilmington, DE	89/71/t	71
● Wilmington, NC	97/77/pc	45
● Wisconsin Rapids, WI	85/63/t	75
● Wooster, OH	79/63/t	25
Worcester, MA	82/64/pc	55
● York, PA	82/68/t	54

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Tuesday High/low/W	Wednesday High/low/W
Acapulco	92/78/pc	93/77/t
● Addis Ababa	73/56/r	70/56/r
Algiers	92/79/pc	94/76/s
Amman	96/75/s	93/72/pc
Amsterdam	73/54/pc	82/61/pc
Ankara	91/68/s	93/69/s
Asuncion	66/59/sh	80/62/pc
Athens	96/79/s	95/80/s
Auckland	60/50/pc	61/54/pc
Baghdad	119/91/pc	120/92/pc
Bangkok	91/80/r	93/81/c
Beijing	91/75/t	79/72/r
Beirut	90/78/s	90/78/s
Belgrade	99/69/s	90/59/s
Berlin	72/52/pc	77/54/s
Bogota	69/47/pc	67/46/sh
Brussels	80/54/s	89/59/s
Bucharest	96/68/s	92/67/s
Budapest	97/63/s	87/58/s
Buenos Aires	52/47/c	52/48/r
Cairo	104/80/pc	103/79/pc
Cape Town	68/46/s	72/50/s
Caracas	90/78/r	90/76/r
Casablanca	87/69/s	91/70/s
● Colombo	87/78/r	88/79/r
Copenhagen	69/53/s	67/56/pc
Damascus	104/70/s	101/69/s
Dublin	78/58/pc	80/61/pc
Geneva	91/65/t	91/64/s
● Guatemala City	82/64/t	82/64/t
Hanoi	101/83/t	99/81/t
Harare	79/51/pc	69/49/sh
Havana	92/74/sh	92/72/r
Helsinki	65/52/sh	64/51/s
Hong Kong	96/86/pc	95/84/t
Jakarta	90/76/pc	91/75/pc
Jerusalem	90/71/s	90/71/s
● Johannesburg	42/37/sh	49/36/c
Kabul	92/70/pc	93/70/pc
Khartoum	97/82/t	103/84/pc
Kyiv	87/60/s	75/55/s
Kingston	94/81/s	93/82/t
La Paz	52/30/pc	58/29/s
● Lagos	83/75/t	84/76/t
Lima	78/70/pc	78/69/pc
Lisbon	85/66/s	89/67/s
London	80/61/s	92/66/s
Madrid	99/65/s	102/69/s
● Manila	88/79/r	87/79/t
Mexico City	76/54/sh	78/56/r
Milan	100/76/t	97/76/s
Mombasa	86/70/sh	87/70/sh
Montevideo	52/42/c	53/46/c
Montreal	80/62/sh	78/62/sh
● Moscow	78/55/pc	65/51/sh
Nairobi	77/52/pc	79/54/pc
● New Delhi	91/80/r	96/83/pc
Panama City	95/77/r	91/76/t
Paris	92/67/s	97/70/s
Port-au-Prince	101/75/t	93/73/t
Rio de Janeiro	70/66/sh	74/67/pc
Riyadh	111/89/pc	112/88/pc
Rome	96/72/s	96/74/s
San Jose	87/71/t	86/70/r
● San Salvador	91/69/t	92/70/t
Santiago	53/40/c	59/39/sh
Sao Paulo	62/55/c	74/62/c
Sarajevo	96/61/s	90/57/s
● Shanghai	87/79/r	84/78/r
Singapore	91/80/t	92/79/t
Stockholm	64/44/pc	67/48/pc
Sydney	72/49/s	67/51/s
Taipei	94/79/t	96/79/t
Tegucigalpa	88/68/t	89/67/pc
Tehran	98/77/pc	97/76/pc
● Tokyo	84/73/pc	81/73/t
Toronto	82/60/pc	81/63/sh
Tunis	98/75/s	100/76/s
Vancouver	73/59/s	73/60/sh
Vienna	89/60/s	83/56/s
Warsaw	72/51/pc	75/53/s
● Yerevan	80/62/t	81/65/t
Zagreb	98/65/s	90/59/s
Zurich	90/59/s	91/55/s

● Denotes possible travel delays Tuesday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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European startups bid to renew water-bombers

Skills to design seaplanes are scarce, expert says

Tim Hepher, Giulia Segreti and Allison Lampert
REUTERS

TOULOUSE, France – Deep inside the carcass of a disused turboprop aircraft, engineer Jonathan Beck squeezes between rows of tanks as he demonstrates how his French startup plans to challenge aging Canadair water-bombers in combating European wildfires.

From the birthplace of Concorde to the laptops of a retired general in southern France or an architect in Belgium, designs for water-bombers have gained momentum after destructive wildfires across Europe this year.

A parliamentary panel warned last year that France's existing fleet of aerial firefighters faced a "major crisis" and called for European alternatives to the rugged water-scooping Canadairs, which have dominated the market for decades.

At first glance, the task looks daunting. A water-scooper is partly a seaplane, the art of which has eroded over the years.

"We will have eight tons of water inside this aircraft," former Airbus engineer Beck, who heads design at Positive Aviation, told Reuters, pointing to Y-shaped pipes that would draw water from new floats designed to skim over lakes or sea.

The Toulouse-based startup is using the dismembered ATR-72 fuselage as an early demonstrator or testbed, and giving a new lease of life to the historic Hangar 16 that spawned Concorde.

A few miles away, Kepplair is receiving an ATR-72 to test its vision of a ground-loaded tanker to replace Canada's veteran Dash-8 on pre-emptive patrols to tackle initial outbreaks.

"It's the difference between an uncontrollable fire and one that is halted quickly," said Kepplair founder David Joubert.

Europe's last serious effort to match Canadair by Germany's Dornier and Italy's Aeritalia in the 1980s, Advanced Amphibious Aircraft, never left the drawing board due to cost.

"Western nations... have lost their skills in professional seaplane design since the 1950s or even World War II," said former Advanced Amphibious Aircraft project chief Elmar Welczek, a German professor widely seen as a leading expert in the mainly forgotten field of water flying.

Before they can quench a single flame, would-be water-bombers must scoop up significant amounts of capital to fund the R&D, certification tests and factories needed.

"What I think people under-estimate is the time to go from design to delivery," said John Boag, CEO of top private Canadair operator Avincis.

Estimates of development costs by entrepreneurs run from tens of millions for a simple conversion to $1 billion for a new plane and analysts warn that could go far higher.

The fuselage of an ATR-72 turboprop aerial firefighting demonstrator stands in Hangar 16, a former Concorde plant now being used by Positive Aviation, in Toulouse, France, July 31.
TIM HEPHER/REUTERS

Positive Aviation hopes to tap a market for converting second-hand planes and be ready for 2028, company president Laurent Schmitt said. It has a provisional order for 10 planes from U.S.-based Bridger Aerospace.

Kepplair is raising a new round of funding and aims to start deliveries next year, Joubert said.

At least three other firms are touting even bolder plans to design and build planes from scratch, while so far giving few details in public about their backers.

The most prominent so far is French startup HYNAERO, which announced Latecoere – a pioneer of early boat planes and now an aerostructures supplier – as a provisional partner last week.

It says its Fregate-F100 scooper plane would hold 10 tons of water and cost the same as a Canadair – roughly $80 million with support – but be twice as efficient in fighting fires.

In Italy, 19-01 Holding has been promoting since 2011 what it calls an integrated firefighting and emergency-response system centered on a new amphibious plane, WF-X.

CEO Renato Sacchetti said assembly would start in Italy from 2031. He added it would have entirely private funding but declined to give details.

In Belgium, the amphibious Seagle is the brainchild of Gaetan du Four, an architect who aims to partner with industrial groups. He is candid about financial and industrial challenges.

"We are looking at the middle of next decade because we have to get funding. But I don't think any other (new) plane will fly before then," he told Reuters.

Startups must also compete with a new version of the Canadair, which resumed production this year subject to safety approval, after an 11-year gap.

Deliveries of the DHC-515 have been delayed three years to 2028, but owner De Havilland Canada argues alternatives carry more risk. "It's a lot of years and a lot of engineering," said Neil Sweeney, its corporate affairs vice-president.

Even so, Europe's aspiring water-bombers see a window of support as politicians debate firefighting capacity.

"What worries me is that in four weeks' time, nobody will talk about it, either media or politicians," Schmitt said.

Trump extends Jones Act waiver for 90 days, narrows scope

Move aims to lower gas prices by increasing local shipping flexibility

Jarrett Renshaw
REUTERS

President Donald Trump has extended for 90 days a waiver allowing foreign-flagged ships to transport oil and other commodities between U.S. ports, but imposed new limits after shipbuilders and their allies in Congress argued the policy was undermining the domestic maritime industry, the White House said.

The extension, finalized on Aug. 10 , comes as the war with Iran disrupts global crude flows and pushes up fuel costs, increasing pressure on the administration to find ways to ease transportation bottlenecks and keep gasoline and other energy prices from rising further.

The 90-day extension ensures the U.S. military and key industries maintain uninterrupted access to critical resources, White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said.

"Data shows the waiver has driven a significant increase in domestic deliveries of essential products such as gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel," Rogers said in a post on X.

Under the new terms, the administration has narrowed the scope of the relief, requiring individual voyages to undergo case-by-case review rather than allowing foreign ships to receive blanket exemptions from the Jones Act, a White House official confirmed.

The Jones Act requires cargo moving between U.S. ports to be carried on ships built in the United States, owned by U.S. companies and crewed by American workers, and the waiver aims to lower gas prices by increasing shipping flexibility and reducing transport bottlenecks.

The waiver was set to expire on Aug. 16 without the extension. It is the longest suspension of the more than a century-old law in its history.

Targeted Jones Act waivers provide critical flexibility to move American energy efficiently between U.S. ports and deliver fuels to consumers at a time of ongoing global market volatility, industry trade group American Petroleum Institute said.

While the Jones Act waiver increases the availability of tankers to move fuel, it would likely only reduce gasoline prices by pennies per gallon, some analysts and industry experts have said.

The American Maritime Partnership, which is in favor of the Jones Act, said it was disappointed that the waiver had been extended but that requiring a case-by-case review is an improvement over the previous blanket waiver.

The group urged the Trump administration to conduct a rigorous review of the national defense justification for each waiver request and assess the availability of U.S. vessels before allowing a foreign vessel to move cargo between U.S. ports.

About 208 exemptions to the Jones Act were granted in about 4-1/2 months through Aug. 3, U.S. government data showed.

Conservative think tank Cato Institute, which has long called for the law to be repealed, said Congress should make changes to the Jones Act, calling temporary, product-specific waivers a band-aid.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Wall Street ends down as Hormuz deal dissolves

Caroline Valetkevitch and Noel Randewich
REUTERS

The Nasdaq and S&P 500 closed lower on Aug. 10, with declines in Intel and other chipmakers, as investors became less confident about a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

President Donald Trump demanded that Iran pay compensation for the people he said it had killed in wars, attacks and protests. Earlier, Iran called for Washington to meet conditions, including recompensing Tehran for the damage caused since the United States and Israel launched strikes on its territory more than five months ago.

With investors less optimistic about a resolution of the Middle East crisis, U.S. crude oil jumped about 5% to settle at $82.13 a barrel. Reopening the flow of oil through the Strait could mitigate concerns over heightened energy prices that have spurred inflation worries and led to concerns that central banks would have to raise interest rates.

Also weighing on the market were shares of Intel, which fell 4.1% after the chipmaker said it was planning to raise $15 billion through a share sale.

The S&P 500 notched a record-high close on Aug. 7, helped by much stronger than expected earnings results.

"It's record margins and record earnings. That's just been the story of this market, and yet the overlay of the Iran conflict just pulls risk sentiment on and then pulls it off," said Tom Hainlin, an investment strategist at U.S. Bank Wealth Management in Minneapolis.

"The direct impact is just the energy sector and ... oil prices, and they're just sticky here above where they were on Feb. 27 before the conflict. So there's clearly no transparency of the path to get back to where we were before the conflict started, and so that premium's just being built in. So far, the world's been able to work around it, but those workarounds don't last forever." Shares of Nvidia dropped 2.9%. A person familiar with the matter told Reuters on Aug. 10 that a group of financial firms, including Apollo Global and Blackstone, is working with Nvidia to put together a $500 billion funding package for AI infrastructure development.

The S&P 500 declined 0.06% to end the session at 7,753.12 points.

The Nasdaq declined 0.32% to 26,605.36 points, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average declined 0.11% to 53,976.04 points.

Reports later this week could offer clues on the Federal Reserve's monetary policy path. Data on Aug. 7that showed U.S. employers unexpectedly shed 23,000 jobs in July prompted traders to cut odds of a Federal Reserve interest-rate hike in September. Traders now price in a 52% chance of a rate hike in September, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

More quarterly results are on the agenda as well, including reports from semiconductor company Applied Materials and networking equipment maker Cisco.

About 85% of the 436 companies in the S&P 500 that have reported earnings so far this period have beaten estimates, according to LSEG data.

Declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.39-to-1 ratio on the New York Stock Exchange. There were 297 new highs and 149 new lows on the NYSE.

On the Nasdaq, 1,928 stocks rose and 2,841 fell as declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.47-to-1 ratio.

The S&P 500 posted 20 new 52-week highs and one new low while the Nasdaq Composite recorded 107 new highs and 74 new lows.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Aug. 11. On this date in:
1903: The first U.S. patent for instant coffee was issued to Chicago chemist Satori Kato. He had previously developed a dehydration process for tea.
1909: The SOS radio distress signal was heard in action for the first time, sent by the SS Arapahoe off the coast of North Carolina. The distress signal had been CQD – CQ for "message coming," and D for "distress." The International Radiotelegraph Convention thought SOS sounded more distinctive.
1911: At a Honolulu swim meet, Duke Kahanamoku broke the 100-yard freestyle record by 4.6 seconds, using the then-unique combination of the Australian crawl stroke with a flutter kick. He went on to win Olympic medals, break more records and become the father of modern surfing.
1919: Friedrich Ebert, president of Germany, signed the Weimar Constitution into law. The document established Germany as a democratic republic.
1919: Andrew Carnegie died at 83. Born to poor weavers in Scotland, he became a steel and railroad baron before devoting his time and millions to charity, writing, "The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced."
1924: In a big step for political campaign advertising, the first newsreel was filmed of U.S. presidential candidates. Participants included President Calvin Coolidge, John W. Davis and Robert La Follette. According to the Library of Congress, "Silent Cal" hated every minute of the experience.
1934: A group of federal prisoners considered to be the most dangerous landed on "The Rock," Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. No one is known to have ever successfully escaped.
1965: People began rioting in Los Angeles' predominantly Black Watts neighborhood after a crowd watched White policemen forcefully subdue a Black man. The protests resulted in 34 deaths and more than $40 million in property damage.
1972: The last U.S. ground combat unit left the Da Nang area in South Vietnam, ending America's ground war and eight-year direct intervention. The 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry – nicknamed "The Gimlets" – had arrived almost exactly 6 years earlier.
1973: Hip-hop was born at a party in the Bronx when Jamaican American DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell) played the same album on two turntables, using them to extend the drum break for dancing.
1981: Writer Larry Kramer held a packed meeting of men in his Greenwich Village apartment to hear from a doctor about the disease that was killing gay men. The group started raising money for research and became the AIDS organization Gay Men's Health Crisis.
2014: Comedian/actor Robin Williams died by suicide at age 63. Examiners later learned he had been suffering from Lewy body dementia.

– USA TODAY Network

Evacuees return as WA wildfires wind down

Firefighters focus on hot spots remaining in debris

Steve Gorman
REUTERS

Many evacuees among the tens of thousands forced to flee a cluster of wildfires near Spokane, Washington, were allowed back to their homes on Aug. 9 as firefighters stepped up efforts to extinguish the remaining hot spots.

Despite another round of hot, dry weather over the weekend, nearly 1,700 firefighters managed to prevent further spread of flames from three blazes that erupted on the outskirts of the state's second-most populous city on Aug. 1, officials said. As of Aug. 9, those fires had scorched 10,000 acres and destroyed or heavily damaged more than 900 homes in and around Spokane.

At the height of the conflagration, as many as 64,000 residents were under evacuation orders as wind-driven flames engulfed neighborhoods and kept firefighters on the defensive. No serious injuries or fatalities have been reported.

For several days, the Spokane-area fires ranked as the top firefighting priority in the country as a whole, including the drought-parched Pacific Northwest, where dozens of wildfires have burned for weeks, belching smoke and soot across a wide region.

North of the U.S.-Canadian border, a separate wildfire burned in a wine-producing region of British Columbia over the weekend, officials said. A state of emergency was declared in the Canadian province and about 18,000 people were ordered to evacuate as towering walls of flame devoured homes and other properties.

In Washington, firefighting mop-up operations continued on Aug. 9, with crews starting to focus on tamping down hot spots in the smoldering ruins of neighborhoods hardest hit, fire officials said.

Communities in the heart of the fire zones will remain off-limits to residents indefinitely until authorities can ensure conditions are safe. But roads were reopened and evacuation orders lifted in communities beyond the immediate footprint of the fires, allowing people displaced from those areas to return home, Spokane County Sheriff John Nowels said at a Aug. 9news conference.

"People have been out of their homes for over a week now. That's a long time," Nowels said. "And I know there's a lot of people who aren't sure if they have a home to come home to, or if their home is standing whether they'll be able to inhabit it anytime soon."

The cause of the Spokane-area fires remains under investigation, though a local resident, Aaron Farinacci, 37, was arrested Aug. 4 and charged with arson in connection with one of the blazes.

A judge has ordered that Farinacci, who spent several years in prison on a manslaughter conviction for killing his father in 2010, undergo a psychiatric evaluation to determine whether he is competent to stand trial.

As of Aug. 9, those fires had scorched 10,000 acres and destroyed or damaged more than 900 homes in and around Spokane, Washington. DAVID RYDER/REUTERS

Residents dig through debris near a crushed car and a collapsed building after an earthquake in Cali, Colombia, Aug.10.
CHRISTIAN ESCOBARMORA/ REUTERS

Colombia

Continued from Page 1NN

"They are alive," he said. "We are making space so we can free them and get them out."

Juan Carlos Osorio told Caracol Television that the collapse of one building "sounded like a bomb," as he helped remove debris from a collapsed structure in Cali.

"All of us neighbors are working together, forming human chains. We need heavy equipment. There are many people trapped."

Colombia's civil aviation authority suspended operations at several airports in the country's west, including Pereira, Manizales, Quibdo, Armenia, Cartago and Buenaventura, while engineers carried out structural inspections.

Colombia sits along the seismically active Pacific Ring of Fire and records thousands of mostly minor earthquakes each month.

Northwestern University seismologist Suzan van der Lee said the quake's powerful magnitude, inland location and strike-slip motion may have amplified damage in populated valleys despite its considerable depth.

"This one was far below the crust, and in theory it shouldn't cause as much shaking. At this magnitude, it did actually cause a lot of shaking," she said.

The Colombian Geological Service said 21 aftershocks had been recorded by late Aug. 10 and warned that additional tremors were likely.

Colombia's coffee region was devastated by a magnitude 6.2 earthquake in 1999 that killed more than 1,000 people, particularly around Armenia and Pereira.

Iran

Continued from Page 1NN

Trump also said Iran should compensate families of the 17 U.S. sailors killed in an October 2000 attack in Yemen on the naval vessel USS Cole, which has been blamed on al Qaeda, not Iran.

"Also, with respect to the Iran negotiations, Iran should be responsible for the damages and death caused to the people of Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Gaza!" Trump wrote in a Truth Social post.

Iran earlier said it was nearing a final pact with Oman defining new shipping lanes between them through the Strait of Hormuz but repeated that the United States must meet conditions, including compensation and an end to sanctions and military threats before the key waterway is reopened.

The strait, through which about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas flowed prior to the conflict, has been effectively blocked since the war began, pushing up oil prices and inflation.

Trump under pressure

Ironically, the agreement with Oman would give Tehran more leverage over the key waterway than it had before the war began. Trump is under pressure to end a war that is deeply unpopular at home ahead of midterm elections in November, and high fuel prices are a top issue in rural areas that have backed him in the past.

"What you're seeing here is the beginning of a capitulation," Democratic U.S. Rep. Bill Keating said on CNN. "This is reality. It's sinking in."

Earlier on Aug. 10, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said talks with Oman were "progressing smoothly and constructively," with an agreement reached on a shipping route map, while some technical issues remained unresolved.

Baghaei said the discussions also covered services which would normally involve payment, such as safe navigation, environmental protection, maritime services and combating crime.

U.S. officials have repeatedly ruled out any deal that would allow Tehran to charge fees for access to the strait.

But months of U.S. military efforts, including a two-week campaign of strikes in July, have not broken Iran's grip on the strait, despite Trump's misleading claim, repeated on Aug. 10, that the strait was open and, "The only one that has control of the Strait of Hormuz right now is the United States Navy."

Washington and Tehran agreed to a ceasefire in June, but the United States reimposed a blockade on Iranian shipping in July, a move that Tehran said violated the truce.

Iran has been striking back with missiles and drones against Washington's allies in the region, while also targeting commercial ships transiting the strait without its permission.

House

Continued from Page 1NN

Cooke, a dairy farmer's daughter who says Trump has left rural voters behind, to recapture the rightward-trending district.

With fewer voters splitting tickets and gerrymandering reshaping congressional maps, "any district that is mathematically competitive is going to get a significant amount of attention," said Anthony Chergosky, political science professor at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The district's last three elections were decided by between 3 and 4 percentage points, including Van Orden's win over Cooke in 2024.

The district is split between farmland and larger towns that are home to universities and corporations like home improvement store chain Menards. Former President Barack Obama won the district in his two presidential races, but the district voted for Trump in each of his elections.

Van Orden, a retired Navy SEAL and occasional actor, attended the Jan. 6, 2021 pro-Trump rally that later ended in rioters storming the Capitol.

He has been a staunch supporter of White House policies including 2025 tax-cut legislation that sharply cut Medicaid, the SNAP food assistance program and renewable energy incentives. Those cuts have hit rural areas, which have high rates of poverty and food insecurity, hard.

Van Orden also voted against rescinding some of Trump's controversial tariffs. The administration's tariff policies have stalled purchases of U.S. agricultural products, including by China, a major consumer of goods such as soybeans, which are widely grown in the district.

And he is a vocal backer of Trump's war with Iran, which has driven up the cost of fuel and fertilizer.

Before Trump spoke at a June rally in Chippewa Falls, Van Orden told the crowd, "We're going to make sure that our farmers don't have to wring their hands at night because they're worried about paying the bills."

Van Orden, in an interview with Reuters, acknowledged that the war had driven up costs, but he still sees the cause as just.

"If we can hold these people accountable for killing my friends and make sure they don't have the ability to hold the world economically hostage, this short-term trouble that we have right now, I think is going to be worth it in the long run," he said, referring to Iran's government.

He cited the House passage of legislation, which is not yet law, that allows year-round sales of higher-ethanol gasoline, as a signal that he is trying to reduce fuel costs.

From his farm in Ferryville not far from the Mississippi River, Dylan Bruce, 33, a produce and seed farmer, said the region is in a fuel and farm crisis.

An April American Farm Bureau survey showed 70% of its members were unable to afford fertilizer. As of Aug. 9, diesel averaged $5.05 a gallon in Wisconsin, down from a May peak of $5.87, but still far more than the $3.51 average a year ago, according to American Automobile Association data. Bruce said his business lost a steady source of income after the Trump administration canceled food purchasing assistance programs that enabled state and tribal governments to purchase locally farmed food and distribute it to food banks. He hopes a Democrat can win the seat.

A supporter of Rebecca Cooke, who is running for the democratic nomination in Wisconsin's 3rd congressional district, campaigns during the annual Strawberry Festival parade in Alma Center, Wisconsin.
TIM EVANS/REUTERS

"Things could be different if we had the right change-makers in place."

Rebecca Cooke
Democratic congressional challenger for Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District

Dean Rosenbrook, a corn and soybean farmer at Trump's Chippewa Falls rally, said he would likely vote for Van Orden, but wanted to see the Iran war end.

Fuel and fertilizer prices are "killing us," he said.

Trump remains more popular with rural voters than he is nationally, with an approval rating with those Americans at 51% as of a July 29 to Aug. 3 Reuters/Ipsos poll. That's still down from 60% in February 2025. That falloff is why some of Wisconsin's political strategists believe Van Orden faces a tougher re-election campaign.

Cooke's message has not changed since her previous unsuccessful runs, said Democratic political strategist Joe Zepecki. "The political environment is the thing that is most different."

Unlike the progressives who have won competitive Democratic primaries in recent months, Cooke describes herself as a moderate Democrat ideal for the district because of her background. She recalls her family selling its cows when she was in high school, unable to compete with larger dairies.

"The ripple effect is really felt in a rural economy," she said. "When you see so many farms go under, so many bankruptcies happen, it's tough to just sit by the sidelines."

Cooke moved to Minnesota for college, and worked on political campaigns and nonprofits before moving back to the area in 2014. Van Orden has attacked her for her previous campaign work, accusing her of "cosplaying" as a waitress.

She says her prior campaign work informs her advocacy for rural areas. She wants to expand federal support for rural hospitals so they stay open, slow the trend of farm consolidation, and strengthen labor unions in Wisconsin.

"Things could be different if we had the right change-makers in place," she said.